# The Authoritative Encyclopedia of Scientific Wrestling, Volume IV

By Jake Shannon

To my wife Sondra, I love you.

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## Introduction




The only way for Catch Wrestling to survive is to actively practice under the rules of Catch Wrestling:

- Win the best two of three via pin or submission.
- No point system; it is a win, lose, or draw format.
- Each fall is a minimum of 12 minutes long.

Now during practice, you will want to focus on repetition of the basics through drilling. This will minimize injury and build confidence in the movements among you and your guys. Your drills should address the following basics:

1) Conditioning
2) How to use gravity against your opponent
3) Basic and best positions, transitions, and rides
4) Escapes and reversals
5) Takedowns
6) Pins
7) Concession holds (submissions)

In order to practice, you must first have a place with a mat and a few guys that are interested. Try asking around at local high schools or martial arts dojos that have extra space. I started my first club in 2002 at a small boxing gym in Venice, California. I paid the owner $400 a month for use of his facility for a few hours a couple times a week.

Most recently I have been able to work out an arrangement with a local high school that has a great freestyle club. With the exploding popularity of

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Mixed Martial Arts, Catch Wrestling is a great compliment to any wrestling program.

It is crucial that you get martial art insurance to protect yourself, your club members, and the owner of the space you are using. Once you have a space and insurance, then you need to beat the drum and get some people interested in wrestling to show up. Just be honest and tell them what they can expect!

I am frequently asked if I will give out private contact information for some of the old-time legit catch wrestlers that I know but the answer is always "No". Despite my mission to share the techniques and lifestyle of real Catch Wrestlers, please understand that I respect the old-timers privacy.

Another frequently asked question people ask me is whom I consider to have a "legitimate" CACC lineage. Well, here is a quick list of those that are alive as of this writing:

**Karl Gotch**
**Yoshiaki Fujiwara**
**Minoru Suzuki and Masakatsu Funaki**
**Frank Shamrock**
**Ken Shamrock**
**Erik Paulson**
**Dick Cardinal**
**Billy Wicks and Johnny Husky**
**Billy Robinson**
**Hidetaka Aso**
**Kazushi Sakuraba**
**Josh Barnett**
**Matt Hume**

Now this list is not definitive, it is just a good jumping off point for the sincerely interested.

Over Xmas of 2005 I was able to spend a few days with my friend Karl Gotch while in Tampa over the holidays. At 81 years-young, believe me, Karl can still cripple you...


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In the past few years I've talked to Karl on the phone a few times every week, picking his brain about this and that about grappling. But this was the first time I was going to actually spend time face to face with the man.

I pulled up in my rented car to his apartment and rang the door bell. Karl answered wearing his exercise jump suit and a big smile.

He greeted me with a heartfelt "Jacob!" and ushered me inside. He poured me a glass of red wine, handed me a cigar and invited me outside to his patio to smoke where we talked wrestling for a good hour and a half.

Toward the end of our cigars and wine, and after a few laughs, Karl looked at me very seriously.

"Jesus," he said. "Look at your neck. You look like one of the guys that were at the concentration camp with me during World War II. You got these big muscles everywhere but your neck looks like a God Damn pipe-cleaner! You come all this way here from California, you got to let this old man show you a thing or two!"

To be honest, after smoking a huge cigar and drinking a glass of wine on an empty stomach the last thing I felt like doing was one of Karl's brutal workouts. Luckily I had already been doing many of the exercises shown on his *Conditioning For Combat Sports DVD* independently.

Now, I have been grappling in one form or another since I was 4 years old but I have always had trouble developing my neck ever since I had radiation and chemo-therapy on my neck when I was 16 years old. In fact, my neck broke back in 1992 during a challenge submission match with a collegiate wrestler that outweighed me by nearly 50 lbs (thank god my judo coach, former Senior Nationals Champ Bernd Busch, was a stellar chiropractor).

Well faster than you could say "Great Gama" Karl had me twirling his Indian Clubs (no easy feat since each weighs 10 kilos each)! Afterwards it was inside to work on some Hindu push-ups and half-moon push-ups.

I think he was surprised when I fell into a wrestler's bridge from standing. However, I was even more surprised when he was able to coach me

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into kicking over from the wrestler's bridge. That was something I was never able to do before he gave me a few hints. He said, "Well you are plenty agile, we just really need to work on that neck!"

He had me doing a head-stand, moving my head forward and back, laterally and in circles next!

After a few more exercises Karl was kind enough to show me a few toe-holds, the crooked leg-scissor, some thumb hooks, take-downs, etc. It was some pretty slick stuff!

The next day with Karl was fun. We went to a steakhouse and had some prime rib. We both eyed each other everytime the more "big-boned" clients were seated around us. They sure could benefit from a good fifteen minutes of jumper squats.

Anyway, we finished up and talked some more about history. He was particularly interested in talking about about the DVD I had sent him called Catch: The Hold Not Taken. While he enjoyed the footage and the fine directing, he felt that his one criticism was that proper respect was not given to the American Catch-As-Catch-Can style.

"America had the best catch men in the world, everyone knew that. Maybe now, some of the old-timers tell you this and that, but believe me, I have nothing to gain saying this. I am just an old man and I probably won't make any friends, but I was always that way."

"I remember Old Man Riley came over to the United States to wrestle once. Well, they must have tore him a new asshole because he back to Wigan before he left! He never ever talked about it after he came back."

"Back then you took a ship to America, not an airplane. It took about 8 or 9 days there and about 8 or 9 back. He was back on that ship to Wigan as soon as he landed."

"Of course that is because America had all the best catch men. Men like Frank Wolf, Fred Grubmeier, John Pesek, Ad Santel, Toots Mondt, and the grandaddy of them all, Stangler Lewis."


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"Watching that there film, I couldn't believe the American amateur Dan Gable didn't even know the history of his own sport!"

"Lancashire-style came to America. Everybody from around the world brought a little from each of their countries to form the American Catch-As-Catch-Can style. The American style was unbeatable by anyone on the planet."

"Well back then, the Americans, when they went to Europe, they all went to Paris. Not London, not Prague, not Franfurt. The Americans all wanted to go to the City of Lights."

"This is why the French had such great Catch-As-Catch-Can wrestling at the time. When FILA first started, they had three styles, freestyle, greco, and amateur catch-as-catch-can."

"Robert Arneaut (sp?) had a good school. He had a student, a guy named LeDuke, who was good too. Although he had been mouthing off that he had taught old Ben Sherman a lesson."

"Well he never did, and when Ben showed up at his gym looking to wrestle, well he left before Benny could even lace up his boots. He left so quick that he left his street clothes behind!"

"What also was amazing was that there was hardly any mention of Riley's pistol man, Joe Robinson."

"Old Joe Robby took a liking to me and showed me the ropes. He was the best one there, not Riley. Riley was a business man. Now Riley could wrestle but he was by no means the best one there."

"There was also no mention of the man who taught Riley, the Irishman Pops Charnock. He was a real tough bastard...." Karl and I talked for the rest of the afternoon and enjoyed another cigar.

I spent Xmas day with family eating and being merry. The day after Xmas I had an extra few hours so I head to Karl's.

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Well this time when I knocked, all I heard was a stern "Come in". There is was sitting at his desk with a deck of cards. I knew I was in for Gotch's Bible.

Here's how you do it, shuffle a full deck (Jokers included) of cards. Everytime you deal a black card, you have to do double the amount of the face value. This means, you get a black 8, you do 16. You get a black Ace, you do 22 squats. Spades are regular hindu squats, Clubs are jump squats.

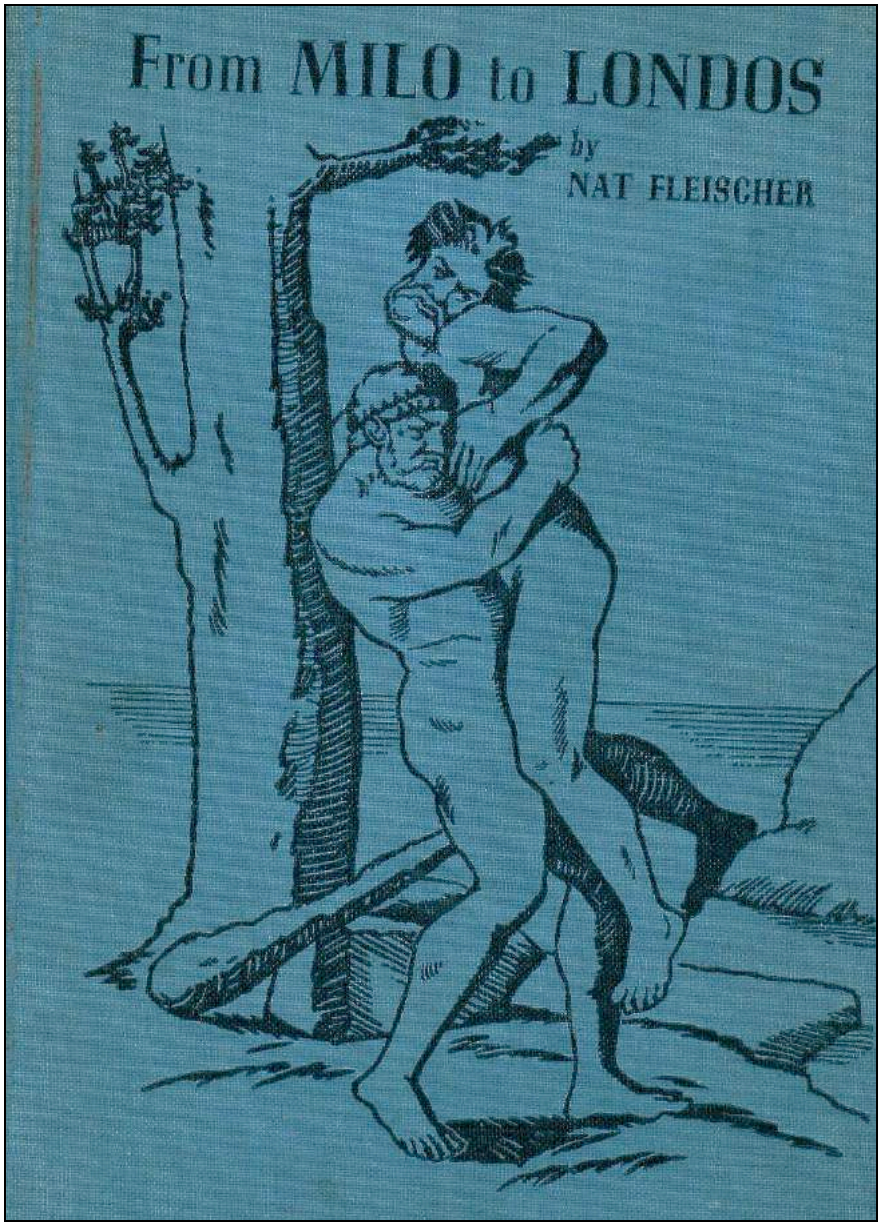
Everytime you get a red card, you do push-ups. This time you do the actual value of the face card. You get a red 8, you do 8. You get a red Ace, you do 11 push-ups. Diamonds are regular hindu push-ups, Hearts are 1/2 Moon push-ups.

Well I had 8 cards left and I could do no more. My legs simply would not go. I was huffing and puffing harder that I ever have on a treadmill. Ask anyone that knows me, I am in shape. Well this kicked my ass.

"I used to do this twice in a row", Karl said, meaning would go through the deck once, then start all over. Now wonder he was such a terror on the mat. He ALWAYS has gas in the tank.


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## From Milo To Londos




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THE RING ATHLETIC LIBRARY—Book No. 13

# From MILO to LONDOS

## The story of wrestling through the ages

WITH

NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

**NAT FLEISCHER**

*Editor and Publisher of*

"THE RING"

WORLD'S GREATEST BOXING MAGAZINE

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*The New York Evening Telegram*

*Author of*
*"How to Box"*
*"How to Referee and Judge a Fight"*
*"Training for Boxers"*
*"How to Second a Boxer"*
*"The Universal Home Boxing Course"*
*"From Milo to Londos"*
*"Jack Dempsey, the Idol of Fistiana"*
*"Gene Tunney, the Enigma of the Ring"*
*"Modern Wrestling, Its History and Its Holds"*
*"Young Griffo, the Will o' the Wisp of the Roped Square"*
*"Early History of American Boxing"*
*"The Negro and the Prize Ring"*
*"Shadows of the Past"*
*"They Almost Made It"*



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# FOREWORD

## *By* JACK CURLEY

THE rise, retrogression, and return to international prominence of wrestling as a premier form of vigorous athletics, stands out in bold relief as a narrative of compelling interest to the myriad devotees of strenuous sport. Such a history is here set forth in minute and exciting detail.

The range of this masterly work is practically unlimited in scope. Dating back 2000 B.C., it covers the origin of the game and its development throughout the ages. Oriental glamor permeates the earlier pages, rich in backgrounds of Egypt, Greece, Afghanistan, China and Turkey. Later, Ireland, England, France, Italy, Germany, in fact the entire European area, contribute to the annals of the game.

Of particular interest to American readers is the section tracing the beginning of wrestling popularity in the United States, with three of our greatest Presidents, George Washington, Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln winning personal fame as athletes who could hold their own with the best mat amateurs. In the modern review, is included the careers of every king of the heavyweight division from William Muldoon to Dave Levin, present champion.

For years the public has craved an authentic history of the mat sport. This great want is now fulfilled in Nat Fleischer's splendid contribution to sports literature, "From Milo to Londos," a most appropriate title. I hope that this work may serve as an aid in restoring to wrestling its classic dignity and recognition as an exercise essential to the complete training of manhood.

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Chapter I

# Wrestling Through the Ages

FOR many years the author of this book, has delved into the archives of Wrestliana for the purpose of gathering data tracing wrestling through the ages. It has been a most difficult, yet a pleasant and interesting task, but one I never would have completed were it not for the aid given to me by A. D. Phillips, the octogenarian sports writer whose fund of knowledge of sports in general and wrestling in particular, is probably unsurpassed by anyone in America. The result of our collaboration over a period of six years, is now put into print, a contribution to sports literature such as never before has been attempted.

To Mr. Phillips, my 85-year-old father-in-law, I am deeply indebted for the completion of this work, for it was his help, at times when I was ready to toss up the sponge because of the vast amount of research entailed in this gigantic task, that gave me the courage to carry on. And now that my work is completed, I hope that it will give to others the pleasure we shall derive out of seeing the first copy off the press. This work traces the development of wrestling back for more than 2,000 years, gives an account of the various styles of wrestling, biographical sketches of the leaders of the sport, past and present, historical data on the most famed matches and traces in detail, the history of the heavyweight championship in this country from its earliest days to the present.

Never before has such a volume of wrestling material been placed in print and the author feels that the publication of this book meets a long-felt want. So far as accuracy is concerned, both in the matter of dates and descriptions of bouts, the greatest of care has been exercised to prevent errors. In short, this work, which has taken the most part of six years to compile, is as complete an encyclopedia of wrestling as human effort could gather.

*Jacob is reported in the Bible to have wrestled with an angel. "And by his strength he had power with God. Yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed."—Hosea, xii,* 4.

We don't know who the Jack Curley or the Tex Rickard of that day was, but we feel quite certain that no sport can lay claim to greater antiquity than the grappling art. On the tombs of the Pharaohs have been found carvings of wrestlers which show that it was a popular game in the dynasties of the Egyptian kings thousands of years ago. From these decorations on the mausoleums of the

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long-dead kings of Egypt it may be gleaned that Strangler Lewis was not the inventor of the headlock, for that was one of the favorite holds depicted.

Literature teems with tales of the sport, and in the ages long gone by, it was held in high esteem by king and peasant. Wrestling was not only part and parcel of the physical life of the ancient Romans, but it was closely allied to the intellectual. This may be judged from the way Quintilian draws upon wrestling for his similes and metaphors in his book "Institutes of Eloquence."

It was the Egyptians who first introduced the sport, and the Greeks, who were the greatest exponents of wrestling, obtained their knowledge from the Egyptians. Homer's description of wrestling and the famous figures at Beni Hasen, from Tomb XVII, confirm this. Legend has it that the old Greek Gods were wont to delight in sitting above the thunder on Olympus' top enjoying the matches between the stalwart Grecian sons, who, stripped of all their raiments, with only a girdle fastened about the waist, performed at national fetes. And the Roman Caesars, little less divine, sat in that great wrestlers' ring by the Eternal City, watching over the games that they had sponsored of which wrestling was the chief sport.

There are about 250 poses on the tombs of Egypt in carvings on what is known as Tomb XVI and a comparison of those figures with what we of to-day know as modern wrestling, is very interesting in that it shows that there is very little new between the ancient and the modern.

The fighting qualities of both the Greeks and the Egyptians, fitted them well for the sport of wrestling. Their celebration of funereal games and religious festivals, their Olympic, Nemean, Pythian and Isthmian games, staged at regular intervals, gave them an outlet for the practice of the sport. It was at the Olympic Games, however, where the greatest strides were made. It was under the influence of Greek civilization, that wrestling had its golden age and received its most elaborate advancement.

It was the Olympic Games that was directly responsible for popularizing the sport. The revival dates back to 776 B.C., and took place every five years at Olympia in Elis, where the famous temple of Jupiter is to be found. At first those games were simply part of the great festival in honor of Jupiter, but later they became more public and were soon ranked the chief sports attraction which drew the Greeks to Elis by the thousands.

In the Olympic Games, the only reward obtained by the conquerors, was a crown of olive. The sports were staged every fifth year and not as is generally supposed, every fourth as is now the case. They were continued for a period of four days and they were the most

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solemn and ancient of all the Greek festivals and drew not only the Grecians as competitors, but also the athletes from neighboring states. Indeed, so much importance was attached to the games, that the celebration became an era amongst the Greeks, who computed their time by it.

The conquerors returned home in a chariot drawn by four horses, and to render more imposing the homecoming, instead of the victorious wrestler entering by the gates, a hole was made in the wall and through this, the chariot came into the city. Although running, leaping, boxing, throwing the quoit were part of the programme, wrestling was the chief amusement. The wrestlers were drawn by lot.

Little balls, superscribed by a letter, were thrown into a silver urn that had been blessed and then the draw was made and those who drew similar letters, were pitted against each other. Each letter was tossed into the urn in duplicate for that purpose. Historic data proves that women were among the spectators and also among the contestants and that on several occasions, a woman carried off the highest award in wrestling.

Wrestling was first introduced into these games in 708 B.C. in the eighteenth Olympiad and in that year, Eurabates, a Spartan, won the crown. Three falls constituted a victory, as is indicated by the following passage from Seneca:

*"Luctator ter adjectus perdidit palmam." "The wrestler lost who was three times thrown."*

And then in West's translation, we find the following:

*"When none adventured in the Olympic san*
*The might of boisterous Milo to withstand,*
*The unrivalled chief advanced to seize the crown,*
*But mid his triumph slipped unwary down.*
*The people shouted and forbade bestow*
*The wreath on him who fell without a foe*
*But rising in the midst, he stood and cried,*
*'Do not three falls, the victory decide?*
*Fortune, indeed, hath given me one, but who*
*Will undertake to throw me th' other two?'"*

History informs us also that when a wrestler triumphed, he was privileged to have his statue adorn the sacred temple at Olympia.

Milo of Croton was the great Grecian wrestling hero. He won six Olympic and many Pythian crowns.

Milo of Croton, who in his day was the champion wrestler of Greece, flourished in 511 B.C. In his time, wrestling was always a death struggle. There was no winner until one of the contestants was sent into eternity.


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The kind of wrestling we now see and which some of the spectators hiss and boo, and over which others cheer themselves hoarse is child's play compared to what history tells us took place when the old Grecian gladiators got together.

And what a man this Milo was! It is said of him in the data on wrestling of 2,500 years ago that he could carry an ox around the stadium, and kill him with his hands and then eat the raw flesh in one day. He could raise a 300 pound man and hurl him 20 feet away with one hand. He could tear up trees by the roots, carry a filled chariot on his head and could kill a person with one blow of his fist.

Such was the man whom the Greek wrestlers of to-day look up to for their inspiration!

But Milo's strength proved his undoing. As a wrestler he had no equal and in the application of his wrestling holds, he met his death. He chanced to pass a tree into which some woodmen had left a wedge when they found they could not split the tree stump with it. He essayed to turn the trick and got upon the stump and with his bare hands loosened the wedge only to have it fall to the ground. With that, the split snapped back into position and caught his hands. He couldn't release himself and there he was held an easy prey for the hungry wolves.

Among the many instances recorded of the prodigous strength of this man, the following, found in an ancient Grecian book, illustrates to what extent hero worship went, so far as Milo was concerned.

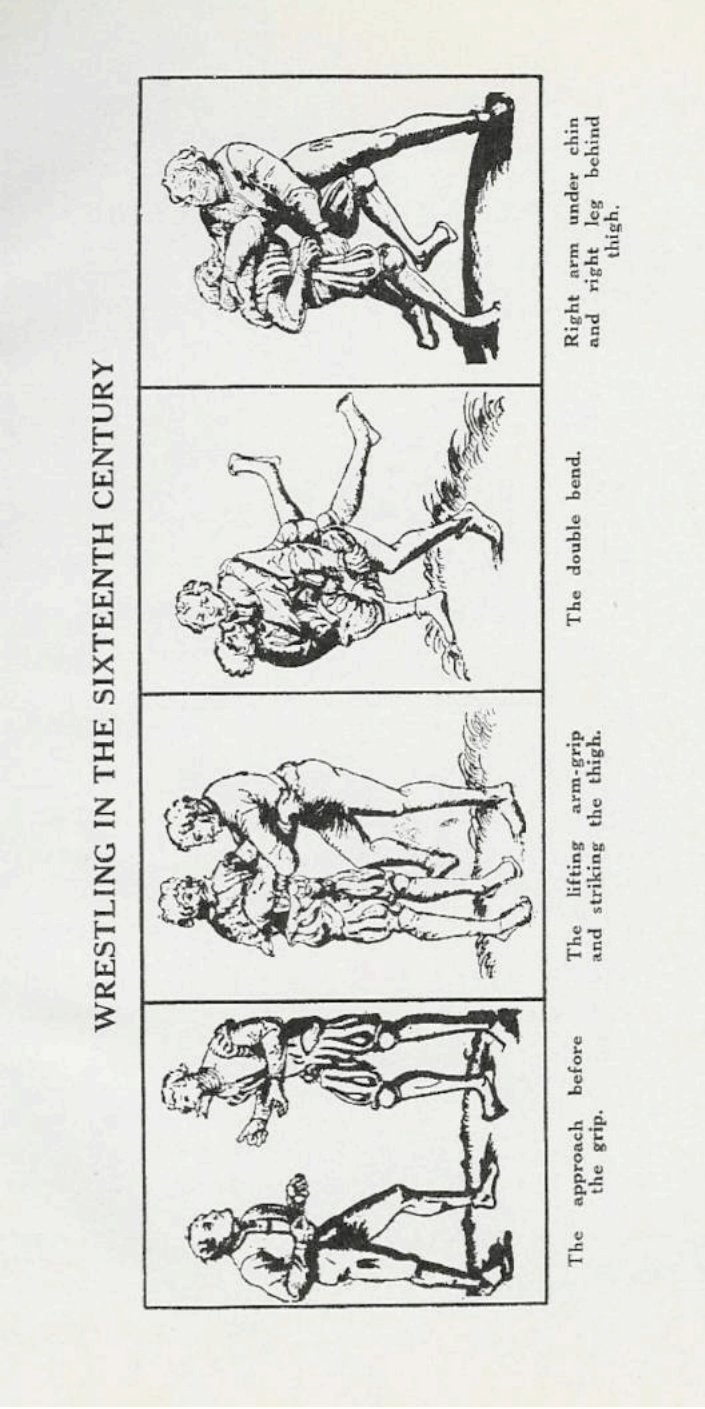
"Having had a statue erected to his memory during his life, there appeared some difficulty, from its weight, of conveying it to the public square, but this soon was overcome by Milo, who, by mounting it on his shoulders, with apparent ease, carried it there. Of his tremendous strength, it also has been said by Pausanius, that he was capable of tieing a bowstring around his head, and bursting it by the action of his temporal muscles."

The ancient Greeks recognized two types of wrestling, the one called the perpendicular in which the combatants were allowed to rise after they had been thrown; the other in which the "wrestler did not require to fear a fall"—to translate literally—and was termed the horizontal style. Then there was a third which consisted in seizing the ends of the fingers of an adversary without touching any part of the body. Some of these ancient wrestlers were very skillful in grabbing and twisting fingers and thus forcing an opponent to the ground.

One of the most famous wrestling matches of those days was that between Ajax and Ulysses. It was Achilles who broke up the contest with the comment:

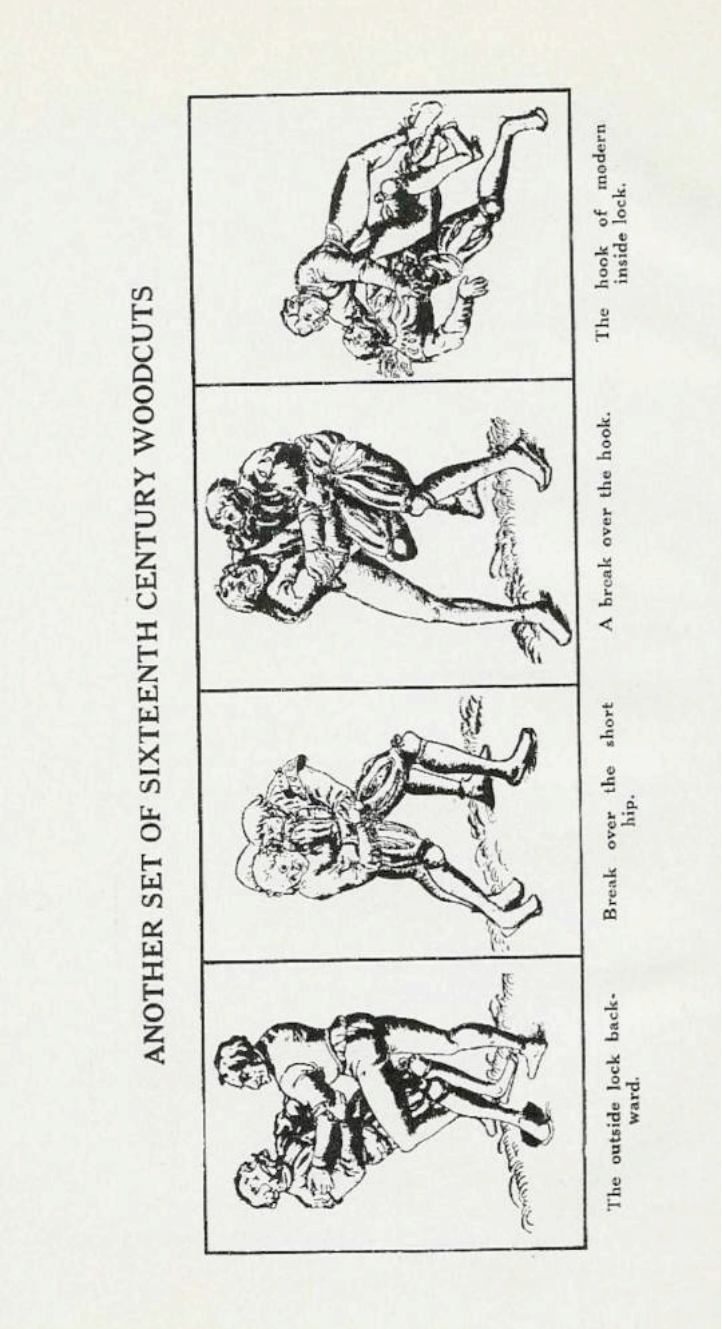
"It is enough. Both of you are worthy of victory."

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The wrestlers we read about in Homer did everything but strike. Pugilism dates to a latter time.

In the "Æneid" is recorded the details of the famous wrestling match between Dares and Entellus.

In the "Metamorphoses" of Ovid one can read about the historic match between Hercules and Antaeus.

There was one hold used in these ancient matches which was always a bell ringer. That was a hold which provided that a wrestler could grab his opponent by the head and then proceed to twist his neck until he yelled for help. It is recorded that that particular hold always made a hit with the crowd and produced much laughter.

Then there was Polydamas of Thessalia. His strength would make Jack Dempsey look like a mere child today. A common trick of Polydamas was to hold back a chariot with his one hand while the most powerful horses in the land would try in vain to pull it from his grasp.

One day Polydamas seized a bull by one of its hind feet and the animal was able to escape only by leaving the hoof in the hands of the athlete.

Caius Julius Verus Maximinus was another husky of those mythological times. He was by blood a Goth and at one time was a herdsman. During the games superintended by Septimius Severus, he entered the lists against the most formidable of his day and knocked down six men without drawing his breath. It was said of Maximinus that he could squeeze and crush the hardest stone with his fingers.

In the chronicles of those ancient times, one reads a lot about wrestling. Probably the most famous wrestlers of mythological times were Antaeus and Cercyon. They did so much injury to their opponents that Hercules was finally called upon to destroy them.

Antaeus, the Lybian giant wrestler, got stronger each time he hit the earth. He was the son of Terre, the earth, and each time he fell and touched his mother he received fresh power. After Hercules had three times in vain crashed him to the ground, he raised Antaeus with his muscular arm, and strangled him without allowing him to touch the ground.

Wrestling holds a high position in physical education in many countries and in the encouragement of the sport, something more than mere pastime is kept in view. Thus, like the ancient Greeks and Romans, the wrestling exercises were and still are often considered a fitting preparation for the exigencies of war by some nations.

In Rome, the contests were fiercely contested. Frequently, the contestants were slaves who if they won, were given their freedom, with death, the loser's share.

In Egypt, the contestants, as seen in the figures on the tombs, wrestled either with closed or open hand, much like our catch-as-


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catch-can style. In Greece, likewise, this was the style before the Olympic games and later they practiced what was known as the "recumbent style."

In Rome, both the "recumbent" and the "upright" styles were in vogue, and instead of a time limit as we now have, the men were permitted, as in boxing matches with the caestus, to wrestle until one succumbed. Death often came to one of the contestants.

In fact, the loser of a wrestling match had the death decree passed on him unless the whim of the public spectators willed otherwise. If his showing was extraordinary, his life was spared.

In England, the art of wrestling was followed centuries back. It was brought to the islands by the warriors who came north both to conquer and to settle. The hardy people took to the sport with a vim and to this day, the British are among its greatest exponents. It is in the British Isles that we find the sport making its greatest progress after the fall of the ancient Empires. History tends to indicate that the Romans brought wrestling to the British during their long occupation of the country.

To trace the early history of the sport in England, we find it necessary to get our information mostly from the poets and other writers. The lack of freedom of communication between the various sections of the Isles, gave rise to different kinds of wrestling in various localities and that is why we have so many styles. There were the Cumberland and Westmoreland, the Cornwall and Devon among others practiced in the early days.

Among the moderns, there was but one wrestler to whom the strength of the great Milo was attributed. He was an Englishman named Thomas Topham. The books on sports of the middle eighteenth century attribute to him feats that must seem far exaggerated to the reader of to-day. Here is a story recalling the career of Topham as it appeared in a London newspaper of 1756:

"Thomas Topham gave a marvelous exhibition of his strength at the Derby. This great wrestler and all-around athlete who stands five feet 10 inches and weights 14 stone, is very well built though he has a limp in his walk which is not very perceptible. He displayed astonishing strong man powers at an exhibition at the recent Derby.

"When stripped, he showed astounding muscularity. He could with the greatest of ease and coolness, roll up a pewter dish of seven pounds as easy as any other man could a sheet of paper. He could hold a pewter pot at arm length and press it flat. He was capable of lifting a two hundred pounds weight with his little finger and pass it gently over his head. He could raise an oaken table, six feet long, with his teeth, although half a hundred weight was hung to the extremity.

"In short, everything he touched, appeared to lose its power of

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gravitation, and both weakness and feeling, he seemed equally destitute of. At one stroke he was able to bend a bar of iron an inch in diameter, like a bow. Then to wind up his performance, he took on six wrestlers, one after the other, and brought each to the ground in an unconscious form, within five minutes.

"After his performance, he defied any man to meet him in any physical test, either in boxing, wrestling or weight lifting but none would accept his offer.

"Having quarrelled with his wife, in the heat of passion, he stabbed her, of which she, however, recovered, but at the same time, he stabbed himself mortally and died on the 10th of August, 1749. He at one time kept a public house at Hog-Lane, Shoreditch, where he often gave exhibitions of his remarkable strength. He was the champion wrestler of his day."

Thus we get the story of the more modern Milo in the form of an Englishman.

The art of wrestling was highly esteemed by the ancients and the sport played an important part in their life. In the ages of chivalry, to wrestle well, was counted one of the accomplishments which the hero must possess. It was a sport which was indulged in by practically every nation and that is why to this day, we find wrestling one of the leading pastimes in every part of Europe. It was especially liked as a sport in the less civilized countries where brute strength was admired.

In old England, the reward annually given to the best wrestlers in the contest between the Londoners and the inhabitants of Westminster, was a Ram. In the rhyme of Sir Thopas, Chaucer says of the Knight,

*"Of wrestling was there none his pere,*
*Where any Ram shulde stonde."*

and again, in his character of the miller, Chaucer says,

*"—for over al there he cam,*
*At wrastlyng he wolde have away the Ram."*

English sports history also shows that at times other rewards were offered, but the Ram was the gift all wrestlers went after. On several occasions, we find the wrestlers competing for a cock. For example, there is an ancient English print, from before the time of Chaucer, which shows two men wrestling for a cock, and the print is in possession of Nat Fleischer, the author of this book.

This sport, as practiced throughout the Holy Roman Empire, and particularly in mediaeval Germany, is fully discussed in a book published in 1443 and written by one Talhofer. There are several other works printed about the same time in the German language in which


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*"At length he falls, the long contest is o'er,*
*And Time has thrown whom none e'er threw before;*
*Yet boast not Time thy victor, for he*
*At last shall rise again and conquer thee."*

In the early part of the nineteenth century, about the year 1835, there was a matman in Switzerland, called Halpenau, who was known as the wrestling king of the Canton Berne, and he was reputed to be a man of iron with a steel-like grip that enabled him to swing a 300 pound opponent over his head just as easily as if he were handling a child. There was another wrestler in that same country called Wollreich, a huge mountain of a man, whom the English of that period called the Jameson of Switzerland because he reminded them so much of their king of the wrestlers, Jameson. Though not as scientific as Halpenau, Wollreich carried more weight and strength, and had a powerful lift. In a championship bout between Halpenau and Wollreich, the match lasted for several hours with neither being able to toss the other and it was finally decided to crown each a king, thus giving the Swiss two champions at one time.

The British claim that Jameson was the toughest athlete to toss in all British wrestling history. He had enormous bulk, was tall and his powerful shoulders made him invulnerable to attack.

Between the period of 1800 to 1850, the British boasted of a number of stars, among them Jameson, Longmire, who in point of science was superior to Jameson but lacked the power; Jackson of Kennieside, the finest grappler of his day excepting Jameson; Wright, equal in all respects to Jameson except that he was inferior in weight and couldn't therefore toss his men so readily; Noble Ewbank, a tough, scientific athlete; Richard Chapman, who won the heavyweight crown at Carlisle three times in succession, the last, in 1841 when Jackson took up the sport and won the title four times in a row; William Roblaw of Egremont; Richard Gordon of Plumpton; William Donald of Dereham—all distinguished wrestling names in England.

Then there was Richard Atkinson, the Sleagill giant who crushed three opponents to earth in one night to win the crown; John Weightmann of Hayton, a thorough athlete and wrestler unsurpassed who won the title in 1825 and two lighter men, John Palmer of Bewcastle and James Scott of Carlisle. Palmer had the distinction of winning both the lightweight and the heavyweight crowns in the same year. Of Scott, the British stories say that "he had tenacity of foothold, possessed all the graces of his art and was the most scientific buttocker of his time."

Hundreds of pages could be written on English wrestling alone, but space won't permit going into further detail. The champions in

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England have been many and each locality had its own stars. It was this that enabled the competition to grow so rapidly and often fierce encounters were staged between the leaders of the rival communities with resulting warfare.

The same may be said of the Swiss. These mountaineers gather annually to witness the fete-des-lutteurs (the sporting festivals that supply heaps of excitement and enjoyment).

In India, China, Japan, Turkey and Afghanistan wrestling is as old as the hills. In those lands the sport dates back almost as far as the carving of the figures in Egypt in the temple of Beni Hasan.

The most polished people of antiquity included wrestling among their sports as a discipline, an exercise and an art. A discipline, inasmuch as it was taught to pupils; an exercise, as followed in public games; an art, on account of the previous training and studies it presupposed in those who professed and practiced it.

Plutarch asserts that wrestling was the most ancient of the three gymnastic games—wrestling, boxing and running—and thus Homer views the subject, and generally follows this order in his graphic descriptions of public celebrations.

This, too, is the natural sequence that Philosopher Square, famous in England, would call the eternal fitness of things. First, the man chooses to wrestle and thus defend himself; then he uses his fists; and should fear, inferior skill or deficient strength tell him that he had better avoid the conflict, he resorts to the third course, retreat.

Wrestling, in a noble, manly forbearing and humane practice of the art, is the indigenous offspring (of English, Celtic, and Gaelic origin) of steady courage and love of gymnastic exercise, and feats of bodily strength and skill. All combative nations, those that appreciate the courage of their men, have followed the sport for centuries. In the Orient, especially in India and Afghanistan, it is the favorite pastime and has been for ages.

There is no competition the Afghan likes better than wrestling. He has ample reasons for such affection, for among the world's greatest grapplers were men of the Afghan people. To this very day, every budding wrestler in Afghanistan calls himself "Rustum," the name of the man who, although dead for more than five thousand years, still remains the sports idol of the Afghans.

That, in itself, would indicate that wrestling, so far as the Afghans are concerned, has existed for upwards of five thousand years, and that will give the readers an inkling of the age of this sport. Rustum Zaal, to give his full name, the greatest athlete of all time in Afghanistan, hailed from a southwestern province called Seistan. His praises were sung to a marked degree of elegance and beauty by no less a poet than the great Firdausi, more than a thousand years ago. He depended entirely for his text upon the traditions, handed


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down from generation to generation of wrestlers in the land of the Afghans.

The people of Afghanistan are a martial race. With them, from as far back as history will recount, self-defense was essential. That is why they took up the sport, because the competition afforded a novel way to defend themselves without the aid of weapons, other than what God gave man. The Afghan to this day takes a keen interest in the sport, but unless a wrestler is of the aggressive school and at the same time shows skill, the natives have no use for him. Mere exhibition of brute force is taboo among the people of Afghanistan, and that is why when you see an Afghan in the ring, you will invariably find a tricky wrestler, who, even if he loses, will give the spectators an exhibition of both strength and skill, and will always play the game fairly. That is instilled into him from his youth.

Being a mountainous people, and extremely jealous of their independence—which the Afghans have successfully defended for ages—they go in for all kinds of sports, especially those that will help in self-defense. The Afghans are experts in the use of the rifle, but most expert in the art of wrestling, their favorite pastime.

Wrestling matches are staged regularly and a good contest will bring out thousands of fans. From the King right down to the humblest peasant, from great court ministers to the pettiest official, from the multimillionaires, of whom there are quite a few, to the ordinary shopkeeper, Afghans of all classes unite to patronize the pastime. That's the kind of encouragement the matmen are given.

And what a show it is! Only the Orient with its romantic touch could produce it.

Then again, the Afghan wrestlers usually are the sons of former great matmen, who, in turn, came from a family in which one or more wrestlers were in the spotlight. That of course adds interest to the occasions, because the spectators remember the father, uncle, brother, and so down the line, of those who are performing.

The Khan family for many years ranked among the greatest of Afghan wrestlers, the successors to the great Rustum Zaal of Seistan. For many generations, every male member of the Khan family and their relations were star matmen.

The story of Rustum is a story of hero worship such as seldom has been told in sports annals. He flourished at the court of King Yakout at a time when wrestling was the King's sport and was patronized wholly by the élite.

According to tradition, he was the most powerful man in Afghanistan. Tradition has it that when he walked, his feet would almost be buried in the ground because of his weight and strength. His superhuman strength was thus a source of trouble to him. One day he prayed to God, so the legend goes, to reduce his strength so that

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he could walk more comfortably and his prayer was answered. He was nine feet tall and scaled 652 pounds, if we are to believe our history, and that made him the pride of the King of the Afghans.

While at the Court of King Yakout, Rustum threw all the wrestlers who came from far-off lands to challenge his supremacy. Some of them hailed from Persia and Turkestan, whose rulers were rivals of the Afghan king. Bouts in those days of old were really "shooting" affairs and keenly contested, so much so that many a wrestler lost his life in the contest.

During one of these bouts, a Turkish challenger was killed, the result being that Rustum brought upon himself the wrath of his royal master and, in consequence, hurriedly left Afghanistan for Persia.

When he fled to Persia, Rustum left behind him his only son named Sohrab. Rustum's wonderful physique and sterling qualities instantly won for him the favor of the Persian king and in a short time he installed himself as the champion wrestler.

Years rolled on, and Sohrab grew to manhood and developed himself into as great a wrestler as was his father, Rustum. This wrestling scion defeated all the matmen in Afghanistan and became its champion. The filial affection, however, was too strong a force for him to settle down in his triumphant career and he started on a hunt for his lost father, whom he remembered only in name.

Rustum, in the meantime, had quit the Persian court for Turkestan, hence when Sohrab arrived in Persia, he did not meet his father there as he had hoped. He then left for other Central Asian countries in an effort to locate his parent.

After a lapse of a few years, Rustum and Sohrab met, not as father and son, but as two wrestlers contending for the championship spurs at the court of a Turkish monarch. Neither knew the father and son relationship. They failed to recognize each other, previous friendly conversations between contending contestants being strongly deprecated in those years of yore.

The match was announced as a one-fall affair and Sohrab scored the fall against Rustum and as this was Rustum's solitary fall in all his life of glory and triumph, it hurt his pride considerably. He prayed to his conqueror to grant him one more chance, and the request was granted.

Another contest was arranged and this time Rustum threw his opponent so severely that he broke his back and injured him internally. As Sohrab lay unconscious and dying, Rustum gloried over his feat.

Sohrab opened his eyes, and in a moment of semi-consciousness, he remarked that he hoped his father, the great Rustum, would some day meet Sohrab's conqueror and revenge the defeat.

With that revelation, Rustum for the first time learned who his



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adversary really was and became heartbroken. He stooped down over the fallen form of Sohrab and wept; then took the sword from one of the onlookers, and cut himself into pieces.

This is the hero-worship legend.

Wrestling to India is what baseball and boxing is to the United States. India has turned out some of the world's most renowned wrestlers, the great Gama, being the most noted.

Gulam was the first Hindu to leave his country to engage in contests among the Caucasian race. He came to Paris, France, during the 1889 exposition. He was of enormous size, standing nearly eight feet. He was well proportioned and strikingly handsome. The European wrestlers who tried him out lasted less than a minute. That made Gulam a tremendous sensation.

He filled the Folies Bergere in Paris by the mere announcement that he would occupy a box seat at the show. He stopped all traffic on the boulevards when he appeared for his promenade, and the Champs Elysées crowds stood aghast when the turbaned, silk-robed Oriental hove in sight. Every drawing room was opened for him and Gulam became the man of the hour in Gay Paree.

During the cold winter of '89, he contracted plural pneumonia, which quickly caused his death. Gulam was given a Marshal of France funeral and his casket was shipped to India mounted on a gun carriage.

Due to native superstition, no Indian wrestler migrated to foreign countries thereafter until, in 1910, Gama appeared in London under the guardianship of Ben Benjamin, to whom the Maharajah delegated the power to transact the star's business.

Gama defeated Dr. Benjamin F. Roller and Stanislaus Zbyszko in London and, there being no other champions to meet, he returned to India. Two years ago, Zbyszko again tackled Gama, this time on his native heath. Gama threw Stanislaus in the ridiculous time of ten seconds.

Following Gama, came Jagat Singh, who hailed from the same school. In looks and appearance, he resembled the Gama of 1910.

"BELIEVE IT OR NOT," Bob Ripley tripped to the Punjab in 1934 especially to get first hand information of the Indian wrestlers. He brought back fabulous stories of their size and feats. But the best and most accurate description ever received came from Anton Pierri and Tom Cannon, two stars of the last decade. Pierri was also known in America as the importer of the most famous Turkish athletes.

He brought to our shores the original Big Youssouf, the Terrible Turk, who was drowned on the French liner, *La Bourgoyne,* in 1898. Later, he also brought over Nouralah, and in more recent years Yousif Mahmout, who was beaten by Frank Gotch.

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In the early '90s, when Cannon was the champion of England and Anton Pierri still considered himself good enough to tackle any of them, a sea captain friend informed the two in London how easy it would be to make a lot of money by going to India and win unbelievable amounts of gold pieces by defeating some of the Punjab champions. The Maharajah would back them for a million pounds, said the captain to the open-mouthed Cannon and Pierri.

We shall continue in Pierri's own words of broken English:

"I look at Tom, and Cannon, he look at me. Next thing we are on the boat, bound for India. We debarked at Delhi and soon are on our way to Punjab. We decide our reputation too big and Maharajah no bet against us. So we decide take other names to hide our reputations.

"We arrive in Punjab. We wait for Sunday and we go see big match in tournament. One Maharajah, he sit on a high gold chair. Another Maharajah, he sit on another big high very gold chair.

"Few minutes, two big wrestlers come on the big soft mat. Oh, how big and how heavy-muscled man! Never see such champion before! The match, he go about ten minutes. The show is over!

"Tom, he look at me and I look at him. We both look sad.

"I say, Tom, this is no place for us to win money. We go home. We go back to England.

"Tom, he never answer, but he come with me like a baby, and three days later we are again on the boat and we begin our trip for home. We never say one word to the wrestlers or to the Rajah. No use."

So you can judge for yourself what a good Hindu wrestler looks like.

An interesting description of Indian Wrestling by Rudyard Kipling, is found in a book, "The Smith Administration," written in 1887. Here is the item:

Scene North of Punjab, between Amritsar and Pathankot.

"Next morning being Sunday and cool, was given up to wrestling. The crowd was some five thousand strong. Eventually, after much shouting, one hundred and seventy men, from all the villages near and far, were set down to wrestle, if time allowed. . . . The wrestlers were called out by name, stripped and set to work amid applauding shouts from their respective followers and trainers.

"There were many men of mark engaged—huge men who stripped magnificently; light, lean men, who wriggled like eels and got the mastery by force of cunning; men deep in the breast, as bulls, lean in the flank as greyhounds, and lithe as otters; men who wrestled with amicable grins; men who lost their tempers and smote with the clenched hand on the face, and so were turned out of the ring amid a storm of derision from all four points of the compass; men as handsome as statues of the Greek gods. . . .



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"As he watched, the Outsider was filled with a great contempt and pity for the artists at home, because he felt sure they had never seen the human form aright. One wrestler caught another by the waist and, lifting him breast-high, attempted to throw him bodily, the other stiffening himself like a bar as he was heaved up. The coup failed, and for half a minute the two stayed motionless as stone, till the lighter weight wrenched himself out of the other's arms, and the two came down—flashing through a dozen perfect poses as they fell—till they subsided once more in an ignoble scuffle in the dust."

The following is an interesting account of the history of wrestling so far as it concerns Japan, and is found in Mitford's "Tales of Old Japan."

"The first historical record occurs in the sixth year of the Emperor Surnin, B.C. 24, when Taimanokehaya, a noble of great spirit and strength, boasting that there was not his match under heaven, begged the Emperor that his strength might be put to the test. The Emperor, accordingly, caused a challenge to be proclaimed and one, Nomi-No Skikune answered it, and having wrestled Keyaya, kicked him in the ribs and broke his bones so that he died. After this, Skikune was elevated to high office and became further famous in Japanese history as having substituted earthen images for the living men, who, before his time, used to be buried with the Mikado.

In the year 858 A.D., the throne of Japan was at stake in a wrestling match. The Emperor Bontoku had two sons, both of whom aspired to the throne. Their claims were decided in a bout in which Koreshito, one of the sons, was proclaimed victor and he ascended the throne under the name of Seiwa.

"In the eighth century, when Nara was capital of Japan, the Emperor Shonui instituted wrestling as part of the ceremonies of the Autumn Festival of the Five Grains or harvest home, and as the year proved a fruitful one, the custom was continued as auspicious. The strong men of various provinces were collected and one, Kayo Bayashi, was proclaimed the champion of Japan. Many a brave man and a stout one tried to throw him, but none could master him.

"The rules of the ring were drawn up in order to prevent disputes. The victor of the match was appointed by the Emperor to be the judge of wrestling matches thereafter, and was presented, as a badge of office, with a fan upon which were inscribed the following words:

"'Prince of Lions.'

"The wrestlers were divided into wrestlers of the eastern and wrestlers of the western provinces, Omi being taken as the center of the province. The eastern wrestlers wore in their hair the badge of a hollyhock and westerners had for their sign, the gourd-flower. Hence the passage leading up to the wrestling stage was called the flower-path.

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"Forty-eight falls were fixed upon as fair—twelve throws, twelve lifts, twelve twists and twelve throws over the back. All other throws not included, were fouls and it was the duty of the umpire to see that no unlawful tricks were resorted to. In ancient days, the prizes for the three champion wrestlers were a bow and bowstring and an arrow."

And now for Ireland. Ireland lays claim to the earliest wrestling matches, although historic data tends to disprove it. Ireland's sports writings place the origin of the sports competition to the Tâiltean Game, which started in 3000 B.C. These games, in which wrestling was regarded as the supreme test of Ireland's mighty men, were founded by Nuguid of the Strong Arm, in memory of Queen Tâilte.

The Irish historians who want the honor for having invented the pastime, point to the 23rd book of the Iliad as the book in which the first mention of the earliest Greek wrestling is found. They place the date as about 1100 B.C., at the funeral of Patroclus and thus prove that the sport in Erin antedates that in Greece by two thousand years.

"By Tre, Pol & Pen, ye may know Cornishmen," says the old ballad and also by his wrestling jacket is the Cornish wrestler known. And wherever "Cousin Jack" has set foot, there he has taken with him his love of a wrestle. From time beyond all memory, even tradition, the Cornishman has the reputation of being the most expert in all Europe. So agrees M. Jusserand in his classic work "Sports and Pastimes of the Middle Ages."

The best exponent of the Arm Flying Mare is the Cornishman. This chip is of long lineage, since mural paintings, prove that it was known to ancient Egyptian wrestlers. Many notable contests were held in the Cornish style of wrestling.

Carew in his "Survey" (1602) states that "you shall hardly find an assembly of boys where a muster of this exercise may not be given." The Cornish Hug has become a proverbial expression.

Fuller (1608) mentions it in his "Worthies of England," "a cunning close."

The earliest English author of a wrestling book was Sir Thomas Parkyns, of Bunny, Nottinghamshire. Richard Trevithick of Cornwall, inventor of the high pressure engine and many mechanical contrivances and a great genius, was a champion wrestler whose great deeds as an all around athlete are cherished by Cornishmen.

Cumberland and Westmoreland, two wild and mountainous counties in the north of England, are possibly the only places where the sport in Europe has been carried on continuously for some hundreds of years. At beautiful Grasmere, on the third Thursday in August of every year, thousands of persons gather to see the wrestling matches. The first man to go down is the loser, and consequently


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the bouts don't last more than one or two minutes, but while they are on, there is *real* action.

The wrestlers in the heavy divisions are big men, running up to 18 stone or more. The greatest competitor of all in this style was George Steadman. Steadman weighed about 265 pounds with 18 inch calves and 52 inch chest. He retired 30 years ago, and for over 30 years (1870-1900) he won the championship of the world in the above style.

During this long span of years his achievements were the most conspicuous on record. Born in 1846, he was bred in the dales and developed into an heroic mould. Unlike some modern heavyweights he could *run* like a deer. In spite of his 260 pounds, he was first among the northern men in sprinting and hurdle racing. There was not a ring in England or Scotland at which he did not win a belt.

Many a raid he made across the border, successfully.

He defeated Antonio Pierri, the great Greek wrestler who imported Alsace dames to Turkey in exchange for wrestlers to bring to America.

He was the most popular of the 19th century wrestlers in England. In 1870, when the French giants, Le Boeuf and Dubois visited London and completely foiled the English title holders, Steadman, then only 24 years old, beat the Gaelic cocks at the Graeco-Roman style. This great Cumberland wrestler was a master performer. At the time he was in the spotlight, the Good Friday Cumberland and Westmoreland Tournaments usually attracted 12,000 to 15,000 spectators.

How many modern feminists have heard of Aijarac? She was a tall and beautiful Tartar princess, daughter of King Caidu, and her name means "shining moon." Her parents wanted to marry her off in the usual Tartar way, but she coaxed her father to agree that no suitor should have her who could not throw her in a wrestling bout, and who was not prepared to wager a thousand Horses on the match.

When that naive old Venetian globe trotter Marco Polo, met the lady in 1280, she had acquired over 10,000 horses, and ten suitors bit the dust. Then came a most handsome, manly, and eligible young prince whom her parents were anxious Aijarac should wed. But Shining Moon pertly refused to listen to her father's subtle suggestion that she should lose the bout. Down went the prince and Aijarac stabled his horses.

How would that sort of thing appeal to our modern girls?



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Chapter II

# Early American Wrestling

FROM Milo to Londos is quite a span, a matter of about 2,500 years, yet it is fact that wrestling has been in existence that long. It was Milo who popularized wrestling and strong man feats in the days of the ancient Grecians, and it was Jim Londos, another son of Greece, who brought back its popularity in America after many lean years.

In Milo's time everything went—gouging out the eyes, breaking of limbs and other acts of brutality. To-day, the kind of brutality which is so often seen and is used as a lure for future gate attractions, is far different from what featured the ancient sport. We of this era, do not seem to object to fisticuffs playing a part in the average wrestling bout, but there the rough stuff ends.

Probably if some white-haired patriarch were to sit in at one of Jack Curley's shows and watch the rough-and-tumble giants hurl themselves at each other, he would be murmuring something of the good old days, yet we of this era, thanks to the advance of civilization, would be far more satisfied to read of the deadly performances of Milo of Croton, than to see them. We are a red-blooded race, a people who like thrills, but we are not blood thirsty. There is a limit, beyond which line we call a halt and that's why science, rather than brute strength, is the keynote to modern wrestling.

In this history of the mat sport, there is little that can be said about the heroes of ancient times other than what has already been told in our introductory chapter. There is insufficient data for such a review. Hence we will pass up the nose-ringed old athletic warriors of the middle ages to discuss those who made history in our own country.

The history of American wrestling virtually begins with the middle of the eighteenth century. Of course, it was not so popular then as later, but it had a good following.

Like the game of baseball, the pastime first took a firm hold on the Americans during the Civil War. Its rise may be traced to impromptu matches in the encampments of the Union soldiers where it proved popular.

But that does not mean that wrestling was not practiced long before the conflict between the North and the South, for we find many references to such competition in the early American periodicals, especially in the *Spirit of the Times, Leslie's Weekly* and *Harper's Weekly*. George Washington, the Father of our country,





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was an excellent wrestler, and so were Benjamin Franklin, Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln. Hence the sport in America really dates back to pre-Revolutionary times but it was not until after the Civil War that the mat game took a firm hold in athletic circles and it has thrived ever since.

Of course, in a history of this kind, it becomes necessary to confine our story to the professional field, as too little is known about the amateurs of the early days. But no review of the sport in America would be complete without telling the story of Washington, the Wrestler, and Abraham Lincoln's mat performances, by way of an introduction.

George Washington was an all-around sportsman. At one time he was the leading wrestler of the Colony of Virginia. His athletic career began in the school of the Rev. Dr. James Mary's at Fredericksburg where at the time, Washington was a boarder in the home of a widow, the mother of two big-boned, well-muscled boys of about his own age, fifteen.

Well grown for his years, George had entered the school preceded by a reputation for his achievements as a fast runner and a good high and a broad jumper. However, he had had no experience in wrestling, a sport in which the two boys excelled. When the lads learned that Washington knew little about wrestling, they challenged the newcomer to a match. Washington realized his short comings, and offered to meet the boys in sprints and in jumping, but when they threw down the gauntlet to him and called him a quitter, he decided to practice a little and to accept the challenge.

Washington, as American history proves, was no quitter. He never side-stepped a task regardless of how dangerous is might seem to him and so the two boys who had hoped to belittle Washington in the eyes of the rest of the pupils, soon learned.

At recess several days after the approach of the lads with their challenge, the boys decided to test Washington's skill and his mettle. First one grabbed George about the waist and before he could extricate himself, he found himself lying prone. The lad tossed him with such force that Washington bruised his shoulders. But that was only the beginning for no sooner did he get to his feet, than the brother leaped at him and duplicated the feat.

Of course, Washington was riled but like a good sport, he took his licking good-naturedly and decided then and there that he would be fully prepared for the next assault. The boys had not only tossed him to the ground but took extreme pleasure in walking over him much to his chagrin. That increased Washington's desire to learn the different wrestling holds more quickly and to master the technique of the mat sport.

Washington was ideally built for wrestling and, having had an

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MODERN WRESTLING HOLDS


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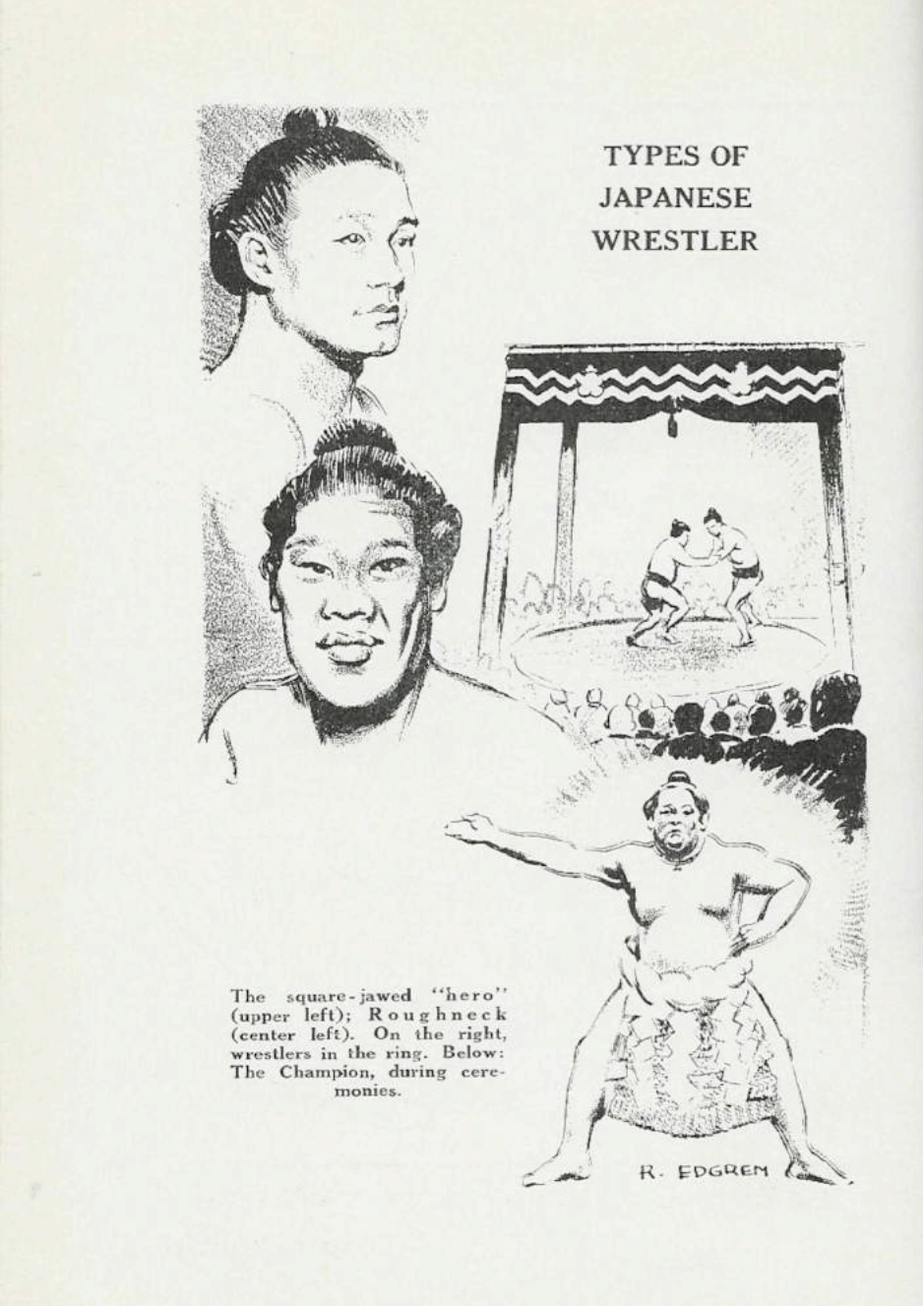



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MODERN VARIATION OF ANCIENT HOLDS


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The square-jawed "hero" (upper left); Roughneck (center left). On the right, wrestlers in the ring. Below: The Champion, during ceremonies.

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outdoor life since babyhood, had practically limitless endurance. Like a later President of the United States—William H. Taft, who was the champion wrestler of Yale in his college days—he, too, had plenty of weight.

Although only in his sixteenth year, he was getting on toward his ultimate six feet two inches of height, and his figure was filling out. Somewhat flat of chest, Washington had broad and powerful shoulders and broad hips. His hands and feet were unusually large and there was tremendous power in his fingers and forearms—so much, in fact, that with a handclasp he once made an Indian "strong man" go to his knees begging for mercy.

The wrestling lessons were daily occurrences for about ten days. Then came a lad who was acknowledged to be the best "tosser" of northern Virginia. By that time, George had had the satisfaction of throwing the widow's sons with ease, grace and celerity. Moreover, there was nobody else in the school who could stand against him. Hearing this, the champion, after sizing him up, challenged him to a match, a defi which was no sooner uttered than accepted.

While the story of that bout is authentic history, the name of the champion has been lost in the mists of bygone days. But whoever he was, when he challenged George Washington, he was in the plight of Ajax when that adventurer defied the thunderbolts of Jove.

In those days, Virginia wrestling had two popular holds: (1) the "collar and elbow," in which each man got a good grip with his left hand on his opponent's collar and with his right on the other's arm at the elbow; (2) the "side hold," standing right leg to left leg, each man with an arm around his opponent's waist and each grasping the other's free hand. Occasionally, the catch-as-catch-can was used, but on the whole the collar and the elbow opening was the most popular.

Great excitement prevailed whenever a strange boy came into a community with talk of how good he was on the mat. The sport was not confined to half-grown lads. Youths, up to the age of twenty-one or older, took pride in their excellence in the game. And when a newcomer was heralded as unusually good, either the acknowledged champion of the locality was pitted against him or a series of bouts was staged on a Saturday to determine who was to meet the cocky stranger the following week-end.

Young Washington was just a raw novice when he received the call to clash with the champion. Consequently, when it was noised abroad that this youth, with only ten days' experience as a grappler, was to go against the title holder, the gallery was all set for a Roman holiday, figuring that the presumptuous youngster's sad fate would provide a belt-breaking guffaw.

But they got not even a grin or a giggle. They did not have time to laugh. That bout was as brief as it was rough and decisive.


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George and the champion squared off with the collar and elbow hold, and the entire story of the sequel to their assuming their positions was afterwards told by the "champion" in these few but eloquent and humble words:

"After a short, fierce struggle, I felt myself grasped and hurled upon the ground with a jar that shook the marrow in my bones."

Having churned up all that marrow in this effective manner, having somewhat dazed the unfortunate owner of the marrow, and also having discolored the once fair skin which encased the jangled nerves of the challenger, George put on the finishing touch by flattening the helpless shoulders against the grass.

Thereafter, George Washington, in addition to his other feats of strength, was noted as the champion wrestler of Virginia. He put down all comers until his eighteenth year when, engaged in the more serious affairs of life, he discontinued active competition.

Not that he lost his technique or his physical power. Far from it! On one occasion, when he was Commander-in-Chief of the Revolutionary forces at Boston, soldiers from two of the Colonies were hurling knotty fists to crunching chins in hot and howling combat when he appeared on the scene. Without hesitation, he strode into their bruised and buffeted midst, and, seizing them one after another by the collar, tossed them into separate, writhing heaps, hurling them in all directions as if they had been ten-pins, a feat, by the way, resembling that of Mr. Taft when, without rising from his chair, he grasped a man's wrist with his right hand and, incredible as it may seem, threw him over his left shoulder and against the wall behind him.

That's the story of The Father of Our Country's wrestling career. Even in Washington's time, the pre-Revolution period of American athletic history, as early as 1750, the art was pretty well practiced in this land. It was from the British, from whom most of the Americans of that time had descended, that the science was attained. Like boxing, the sport was practiced by sailors from Ireland and England who had come to these shores.

Strange as it might seem, the fact is, nevertheless, that to Abraham Lincoln must go the credit for popularizing wrestling among the soldiers. Lincoln was a wrestler of no mean ability, and he not only imparted his knowledge of the sport to others, but did considerable grappling himself.

Few persons ever think of Lincoln as a military man except in terms of association with the Army of the North as its Commander-in-Chief, yet Lincoln was a brave, good soldier in his youth and it was in the army that he gained his skill as a wrestler. In the Black Hawk uprising, after General Gaines, commander of the American forces, found that he coud not check the rampage of the famous

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leader of the Sacs, he called upon Governor Reynolds of Illinois for aid.

The Governor seconded the efforts of General Gaines with a call for volunteers, and among the first to offer their services to fight the Indians, was Abraham Lincoln.

The bulk of the Illinois volunteers came from New Salem, Menard County, and Clary's Grove, Lincoln's home, and because of his fearlessness, the Clary's Grove boys insisted that Abe accept the post of captain. It was an office to which he did not aspire, and for which he felt that he had no special fitness, yet he accepted because of the urging of his comrades.

Being a hardy, outdoor enthusiast, Lincoln immediately put into effect plans for the recreation of his men during their idle periods, and included in his plans was a series of wrestling and boxing matches. The Clary's Grove boys were fully aware of Abe's prowess as an all-around athlete, hence his suggestion was met with popular approval because the boys expected that he would join with them in the competition and in that they were not disappointed.

Lincoln was most popular because of his hardiness and his strength and as wrestling was his hobby, the sport became an everyday amusement in his regiment. Abe engaged in many bouts and came within reach of the regimental championship, but failed to win it because he had one superior. Lincoln tossed seven men before he met defeat at the hands of Hank Thompson, a big, burly fellow who won, not because of superior skill but because of superior muscular power.

Lincoln and Zachary Taylor were members of the same regiment, and after their enlistment period had expired and Black Hawk again threatened the whites, a second call for volunteers was made and both Lincoln and Taylor again enlisted, but this time only as privates. And it is most significant to note that the two simplest, homeliest, and truest men in the regiment were these lads, both of whom later became President of the United States.

It is also noteworthy that to Lincoln went most of the credit for the fine discipline of the men, due primarily to his entertainment with sports events in which he was a master.

At the age of nineteen, in 1828, young Lincoln displayed his marvelous strength and his courage, down in Louisiana, before a gang of seven tough Negroes. A trading neighbor had applied to Abe to take charge of a flatboat and its cargo, and in company with the owner's son, he started on the journey down the Mississippi to a sugar plantation near New Orleans. The entire business of the trip was placed in Abraham's hands. Although Lincoln had previously made only one essay at navigation, he readily accepted the responsibility, and the fact that he was trusted in handling the mission,


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tells its own story touching the young man's reputation for ability and integrity.

He had never made the trip, knew nothing of the dangers of the journey, was unaccustomed to business transactions, and had not been much upon the river, yet he was accepted by the owner because Abe's tact, ability, and honesty were so trusted that the trader was willing to risk his cargo and his son in Abe's care.

The youth swung loose from shore upon his clumsy craft with delight, while the prospect of a ride of eighteen hundred miles before him, and a vision of the great world of which he had read and thought so much, thrilled him.

At the time, he was tall and powerfully built, though he was lean. He had reached the remarkable height of six feet four inches, length of trunk and limb most astounding even among the tall race of pioneers to which he belonged. He already had proved his ability in strong-arm tests, both at wrestling and, when necessary, in self-defense, and so far as courage was concerned, there wasn't a more courageous fellow in his territory. The combative spirit was not one he cared often to display, but when necessity arose, he was Johnny-on-the-spot in the use of his strength.

And he proved that to the satisfaction of a gang of thieves who attempted to rob the vessel after it had reached its destination. Arriving at a sugar plantation somewhere between Natchez and New Orleans, his boat pulled in and he and the trader's son, fatigued from their journey, decided to rest for the night before unloading.

Shortly after retiring on their hard bed, the future liberator of the Negro race heard strange noises on shore alongside the boat. Abe listened and thought he heard the noise repeated, and leaping from his bunk, he shouted, "Who's there?"

But there was no reply. A few moments of quiet was followed by a repetition of the noise, but this time Abe and his companion heard the sound of the invaders closer than before. They scented danger, but young Lincoln, guessing the errand, the theft of some of the cargo, decided to fight his enemies.

Seizing a handspike, he rushed forward toward the Negro nearest to him, and as the invader attempted to strike Abe with a heavy stick, young Lincoln sidestepped, and quick as a flash, let fly his fist. The blow caught the marauder on the forehead and he fell backward into the water.

That served to arouse the anger of the others who were still on shore, and a second member of the thieving gang leaped forward to disable Abe. Lincoln swung over a wide range with his handspike, and when that failed to scare off the robber, Abe decided to employ wrestling tactics. He leaped at the invader, grabbed him about the waist, raised him over his head, whirled him in the air several times,

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then tossed him heavily on the deck. There he lay stunned, and fortunately so, for in a jiffy, Lincoln and the trader's boy were attacked by two more of the gang.

Lincoln seeing one of the Negroes, armed with a bludgeon, making for the boy, dodged to one side then leaped forward and grabbing the Negro by the leg, jerked him forward with such force that he fell. As he did so, Abe was upon him, and twisting his arm, he disabled the invader. Then he raised him over his head and repeated the performance which he had previously enacted with the first Negro. He whirled him in the air then tossed him into the water! Had Abe used his handspike instead of his wrestling skill those Negroes probably would never have lived to be emancipated by the man whom they were striving to kill for the sake of robbery.

But the manner in which Lincoln had disposed of his antagonists convinced the rest of the gang that here was one man the equal of the seven crooks, and all fled. Lincoln and his companion, by this time all warmed to their task, leaped off the boat to the shore and chased the thieves. The Negroes were not as swift of foot as were Lincoln and the trader's boy, who caught up with two and gave them a severe trouncing.

Then Abe and the lad went back to the boat for the purpose of finding the two who had fallen into the water, and they got there just as they saw the pair gain the shore and hoof it as fast as their legs could carry them in the direction opposite to that which their mates had taken. Lincoln and his charge were both injured, Abe with a bruised left hand and a dislocated bone in the knuckle of his right hand, and his pal, with a cut over the forehead where he had been struck by a glancing blow of the bludgeon carried by the second fellow whom Abe had struck and tossed into the water.

Not being armed and unwilling to take any chances of having the desperate Negroes reinforced, Lincoln and his companion cut adrift and floated down the river for a mile or more and tied up to the bank again. This time, however, they decided to guard against a repetition of the previous adventure by watching their cargo until morning.

The trip was brought to a successful end. The cargo, or "load" as they had called it, was all disposed of and the money paid. The boat was sold for lumber, and the young men started back home, partly on a boat and partly by foot, and reached their starting point after weeks of tedious traveling during which on more than one occasion young Lincoln was forced to resort to the use of his fists or his knowledge of wrestling to gain safe passage out of tough spots.

After Abe Lincoln had left home to shift for himself, he decided to accept an offer to join Denton Offutt, a trader, in a flatboat venture to New Orleans. Abe had already made such a trip and was regarded as a desirable man for such service. It had been agreed that John D.


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Johnston, his stepmother's son, John Hanks, a relative of his own mother, and Abe would take the boat south as soon as the snow should be gone. They were to go to Springfield to join Offutt, but when they got part way on the journey, they found that the melting snow had flooded the land and that they could not proceed any farther on foot.

Finding they could not make the journey that way, they purchased a canoe and proceeded in it along the Sangamon River until they reached their destination. They found Offutt at Springfield, but much to their disappointment, they learned that he had failed to buy a boat as had been expected. They were not too much discouraged, however, to decide to build a boat for him, and for their work they were to receive $12 a month each and board from Offutt.

When the boat was finished, every plank of it sawed by hand with a whipsaw, it was launched and floated to a point below New Salem where they had received the commission to take a drove of hogs aboard. At the time, the hogs of that region ran wild and it was no easy matter to capture them. Some were very savage and, after the manner of all swine, were most difficult to handle.

To Lincoln fell the lot to get the loose ones and he didn't fail, although the task was not an easy one. When they were all gathered and penned, another difficulty arose. The swine could not be moved toward the boat.

All the ordinary resources were exhausted in attempts to get the pigs aboard, and the men were exasperated by their failure to make any headway. There was but one alternative.

Up spoke Abe. "Let's carry them aboard," said he.

John Hanks was first to grasp one of the pigs about the body. He squealed and fought, and in a few seconds Hanks was on the ground, the victim of a kick in the stomach.

But that experience didn't upset Abe. He made a dive for the pig which was tangled on the ground with Hanks, and with a firm grip on its hind legs, he tossed it to the ground, then got a body hold on it such as the modern wrestler would take on an opponent, raised it shoulder high, and carried the pig on the boat.

But that was only the start. While his companions stood about to guard against a stampede, Abe went after a second, third, fourth, and so on until he had carried every animal aboard the raft, one by one, using his knowledge of wrestling to complete the arduous task. His long arms and great strength had enabled him to grasp each as in a vise, and to transfer them rapidly from the shore to the vessel. It was extraordinary strength that Abe displayed.

They then took the boat down to New Orleans, with Hanks leaving the vessel at St. Louis. When they got to the Crescent City, and were discharging their cargo, Abe again was called upon to display

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his fistic and wrestling prowess. Several dockhands were eager to obtain work and applied for the job of aiding Abe and Johnston. Naturally, the pair could not afford to spend any money in employing help and politely turned down the request.

That was the start of another commotion. One of the disappointed stevedores, peeved at the turndown, insulted Abe and his pal, and Lincoln resented the insults. He ordered the fellow, who, he later learned, was the king of the Creole roughnecks, away from the vessel. One word led to another, and as Lincoln turned to join his companion on the ship, he received a thrust in the back that threw him off balance. It was only Johnston's quick support that prevented Lincoln from falling face forward.

It didn't take long for Lincoln to retaliate. With swift motion, he wheeled about, caught the rowdy by the hand, swung him around the deck, and then in pin-wheel fashion, hurled him to the ground. The trouble-maker got up with fire in his eyes and while his mates urged him on, he sparred and made for Abe. This time Lincoln didn't waste any effort in routing him and his gang. He leaped forward, caught the rowdy by the arm, twisted it behind his back for a hammerlock hold and made his opponent shout for mercy. He lifted the fellow, tossed the rowdy ten feet or more from him, and without another word, the bully and his companions ran for shelter.

Like George Washington, Lincoln was extremely fond of arduous exercises, and, like the Father of Our Country, he also was a good athlete. It was his prowess with his fists and wrestling that made him a feared man among those who would attempt to take too many liberties with him. Many stories have been told of impromptu fights and wrestling matches in which Lincoln engaged during his early manhood days, and in each he came through victoriously.

Lincoln engaged in manly sports. He was "the big buck of this lick" and said so when William Grigsby fought Lincoln's stepbrother, John Johnston, in a bare-knuckle fight. Johnston was getting the worst of it, when Abe Lincoln shouldered his way through the cheering, yelling hissing crowd, took hold of Grigsby, and threw the fighter out of the center of the ring.

Then, defying the jeering mob, Abe, standing in the ring, said so that all could hear: "If any of you want to try it, come on and whet your horns."

The time came when around Gentryville and in Spencer County, Ind., he won a reputation as the best "rassler" of them all—the champion.

In those days, when Lincoln was in his teens, in jumping, footracing, throwing the maul, pitching the crowbar, wrestling—the pioneer sports of the prairies—he frequently not only won over lads his age, but over boys much older.



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Long hours of work outdoors, clearing the timberland, cutting loose the brush, splitting rails, pulling the crosscut saw and the whipsaw, and driving the shovel-plow, had given muscles of steel to his long, lanky body (he was six feet two inches tall long before he reached his twenty-first year).

One neighbor's boy said of him, "He was the ganglin'est, awkwardest fellow that ever stepped over a ten-rail snake fence; he had to duck to get through a door; he appeared to be all j'ints."

On farms in Spencer County, he held his own at scuffling, knocking off hats, and wrestling. These were some of the pastimes indulged in when he helped neighbors at house raisings and log-rollings—the sports of men and boys at such pioneer meetings.

Lincoln was fast, strong, and keen in competition.

After Lincoln's first flatboat trip to New Orleans, he left the steamer at St. Louis on his return home and walked inland to his Coles County, Ill., home.

Here Daniel Needham, who considered himself "the best man in the county," challenged Lincoln to a tossing match. The match was open to the public, and friends of both men gathered in the "greenwood" at Wabash Point. Both men were six feet four inches in height. Each was a prairie panther.

Lincoln threw Needham twice. The latter's pride was hurt.

"Lincoln," said Needham, "you have thrown me twice, but you can't whip me."

"Needham," drawled Lincoln, "are you satisfied that I can throw you? If you are not, and must be convinced through a thrashing, I will do that, too, for your sake."

Needham stood undecided. Then he broke into a broad grin and said, "Well, I'll be damned." He held out his hand, and Lincoln clasped it.

When Abe Lincoln moved to New Salem, Ill., the boys at the crossroads town looked him over. They wanted to know what stuff was in this giant.

They suggested a foot race with a man named Wolf.

"Trot him out," said Abe.

A place was marked off in the road and men took their places to see that the race was squarely run. Lincoln started off with his big stride, and Wolf used him as a pacemaker but, when Wolf tried to pass him near the final goal, Abe let himself out, and Wolf never did catch up until Abe was declared the winner.

Next, he was to "rassle" with a man from the town of Little Grove.

A square was marked off and Abe said, "All right, let's go."

The two men were in marked contrast to each other. Abe was literally a giant. The other was short and stocky and, the moment he was stripped for action, he ran at Lincoln like a battering ram. Suddenly the future President of the United States stepped aside,

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caught the man from Little Grove by the back of his neck, threw him heels over head, and gave him a fall that took all the "rassling" out of him.

The boys from New Salem then produced a third man for an out and out fight. It angered Lincoln to have to do it all in such a brief time—one event following another and he shouted: "Bring on your man from Sand Ridge. I can do him up in three shakes of a sheep's tail and I can whip the whole pack of you if you give me ten minutes between fights."

But the man from Sand Ridge came up with some of the other men, offering their right hands instead. They had seen enough. Lincoln took their hands one by one. Said the leader of the group: "Abe, you have sand in your craw. You're one of us from now on."

The news came to the Clary's Grove boys, who lived in a settlement four miles away, that Abe Lincoln the new clerk at Offut's store, at New Orleans, "can outrun, outlift, outwrestle, and throw down any man in Sangamon County."

"Is that so," said Bill Clary, who ran a saloon near Offut's store. "I've got $10 to bet that Abe Lincoln couldn't throw our champion, Jack Armstrong."

The bet was taken by a Lincoln adherent. A day was set and men came from all over the country—some for a distance of fifty miles to see the match. Bets ran from jackknives to money and treats of whiskey. A level place near Offut's store was selected.

Lincoln was twenty-one years old, weighed about 180 pounds, and had attained his full height, which was six feet four inches, "when the knicks were rolled out."

Armstrong was short and powerful in build. His strategy was to get in close on his man, where he would have the advantage of his thick, muscular strength.

Lincoln sized him up. The match started with Lincoln holding him off with his long arms, wearing down his strength, and Armstrong got out of breath. Then he lost his temper.

Armstrong fouled by stamping on Lincoln's right foot and instep with his boot heel.

This exasperated Lincoln. A patient man, he, too, lost his temper. He was so aroused by Armstrong's foul tactics that he lifted his adversary up by the throat and off the ground.

The young prairie panther shook him as if he was a rag and then slammed him to a hard fall, flat on his back.

The Clary's Grove boys, seeing their champion on the ground, and their bets lost, started to swarm in on Lincoln. Lincoln stepped back until his back was against a wall, braced himself, and told the gang he was "ready for them."

Jack Armstrong, recovering himself, got up, rushed forward and told his friends from Clary's Grove the fight was "fair," Lincoln



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had won, and he added in admiration, "He's the best feller that ever broke into this settlement."

A bully once went into Offut's store at New Salem with the purpose of engaging Lincoln in a fight and coming out the winner. He was familiar with the fact that Lincoln had thrown Jack Armstrong, the boss of "Clary's Grove boys" but he felt he was a better man than Armstrong.

Lincoln was waiting on two women customers, when the bully, with offensive profanity, sought to provoke a quarrel. Lincoln said if he would wait until he had attended to the wants of the customers, he "would give him any satisfaction he desired."

The women having departed, Lincoln faced the bully, who would not be put off without a fight.

"Well," said Lincoln, "if you must be whipped, I suppose I may as well whip you as any other man.

Lincoln made short work of him. He threw him on the ground, held him there, and, gathering some "smartweed" which grew on the spot, he rubbed it on the bully's face and eyes until he cried with pain.

Then Lincoln got some water and washed the bully's face to alleviate his suffering.

Like Armstrong, this bully also became Lincoln's friend. Lincoln had no malice in him.

In the Black Hawk War, Nathan M. Thompson, nicknamed "Dow," who was in Captain Henry L. Webb's Company of Union County Volunteers, was considered the strongest man. Capt. Sangamon's candidate was Abraham Lincoln. A wrestling match was decided upon as a test of strength. The bets included money, hats, knives, blankets, tomahawks, and whiskey. The match was for the best two out of three falls.

After struggling along with no advantage either way, Lincoln said, "This is the strongest man I ever met."

The men, after a pause, went to it again and for the first time in his life Lincoln was thrown. A second time Lincoln was thrown but the Sangamon lads cried, "Foul." They took off their coats.

The boys from Union County remarked: "We'll see if it was," and shed their coats.

Lincoln stopped hostilities with the remark: "Boys, give up your bets. If this man hasn't thrown me fairly, he could." Lincoln declared afterwards that Thompson was the strongest man he ever met.

Thus we have the story of the two most beloved Presidents of the United States in the role of wrestlers. From the stories told, we can readily understand how the sport travelled with such famed characters as these in the role of pace setters. It often has been said of baseball and boxing that they follow the American flag, and to Abraham Lincoln goes the honor of establishing the mat sport as a regular form of athletic activity in the army.

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Chapter III

# Muldoon's Part in Wrestling

WHAT Lincoln started, William Muldoon, who in later years when he became the chairman of the New York Athletic Commission, was called the Grand Old Man of Boxing, completed. He was the first American Idol of Wrestliana. To him belongs the credit for starting the sport on the upward grade. He was the Graeco-Roman king and a mighty fine one. He had the carriage and every ear-mark of a splendid athlete, and by ear-mark, I don't mean the cauliflower trade mark, for he was truly handsome, kind and scholarly.

On the mat, he knew every trick of the game, and he was temperamental to the point of Richard Mansfield or Henry Irving. He always seemed to have full command of his opponents and also of the spectators. A cutting remark from the gallery or front seat, would instantly halt the match and Muldoon knew just what to say to shame the would-be comedian into retiring from the hall. The name of Muldoon plays a big part in the history of wrestling in America for he was identified with the sport for upwards of fifty years. To the sports scribes, Muldoon has always been the "Father of American Wrestling."

The impressive figure of the Solid Man sent the sport off to a good start in America. The American Sparticus lent a dignity to all of the professional sports with which he was identified. It was Muldoon, whose wrestling prowess the Mighty John L. Sullivan feared, who actually bearded the Boston Strong Boy in his cups and cowed the Strong Boy whose boast it was that "he could lick any man in the world."

As already pointed out, there were other great Americans who wrestled for the pure joy of it in an uncouth and amateur fashion. There were Washington and Lincoln, Jackson and Franklin and others too numerous to mention, many of them men of affairs in our National government, but it was William Muldoon who first made the sport a melodrama.

"The Noblest Roman of them All" is what the newspapermen called him when he passed into the Great Beyond. In the lobby of Madison Square Garden in New York City, there hangs a life-size chromo of the William Muldoon as the "Roman Gladiator," and a more fitting title could not be given to him. A gladiator—every inch of his stalwart form—that was Muldoon.

Muldoon was one of the comparatively few professional athletes who rose to heights of greater fame after their competition than they





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enjoyed during the days of their activity. Back in 1883 the Solid Man conquered the professional wrestling world and later retired the undefeated Graeco-Roman champion. Unlike the champions of recent years, Muldoon never picked his opponent. He was willing to meet all-comers and in every match in which he entered, the title was at stake.

To gain the undisputed right to the world crown, he accepted all challengers until there were no more men to conquer. He made trips to many distant lands, even as far as Japan, after disposing of every American who dared to face him and when he found that there were no more worthy opponents, he left the field to others.

William Muldoon was born at Belfast, New York, on May 25, 1845. His parents came from Galway, Ireland. His father was a surveyor in the British service who was sent to Canada from where he drifted into Belfast, across the border, where he remained for the rest of his life. Because of his service to Uncle Sam, the elder Muldoon received a grant of twenty acres in the Genesee Valley, land that later was incorporated in the village of Belfast and in that village, William Muldoon grew up to sturdy manhood. Even as a young lad he could fill a man's shoes and do the work of the huskiest one among them.

When the crops were ready for cutting, the elder men led off with the scythes, the younger and less formidable trailing along behind. Young William objected to being placed among the latter and, to show him up, the hardened scythe bearers put him out in the front line. It was tough going but young Muldoon cut his swath e'en though the older men kept sweeping for his heels with the points of their scythes.

According to Ed Van Avery in his splendid book, "Muldoon, the Solid Man," that early training in those wilds, was the foundation which made William Muldoon the physical marvel of his time. Gradually he became stronger. His shoulders had the breadth of a man's and his chest was deep and muscular. Mere boys of his age looked upon him as a hero. When his physical prowess brought humiliation upon big lumberjacks and the giants of the forest, the gangling kids of the town were in high glee.

There came an end to all of this. The North and the South had come to blows, not the fist kind, but blows that were to prove cruel, devastating and unforgettable.

The spirit of the fight engulfed the husky youngster. He wanted to tote a musket and do a man's work in preserving the honor of the Union. They wouldn't accept him as a private but there was nothing against a boy leading men off to the wars to the rub-a-dub-dub of a home-made drum and, as such, young William Muldoon waved goodbye to Belfast and her hills and went into the thick of it.

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He was only fifteen. The pity of it if such a fine youngster should crash down with his precious drum and never came back! Muldoon would have knocked flat any man who might have protested his going on those grounds.

His father and mother might just as well have talked to a stone image. It isn't easy to quench the war fires which flare up in a youngster's breast. The romance, the gamble, the spick and span uniforms! The proud generals and the handsome colonels riding at the head of singing men and boys, captivated Muldoon's imagination. There's be no war without him and there wasn't. Any time, boy or man, he made up his mind to go through with a thing, he went through with it.

He passed from the drummer boy stage into a real fighting man at eighteen. He joined Company I, 6th Regiment, N. Y., and saw the hottest fighting of the war under General Phil Sheridan.

Army leaders were deeply concerned over the morale of the troops and they decided that something unusual must be done to perk up the spirits of the men who had gone off to war singing, thinking that it would simply be a week-end skirmish. Most wars begin with that thought in a soldier's head. They soon learned that it was a desperate business and that the South was hurling the best that she had into the pathetic struggle of brother against brother.

Some far-seeing army official—he might have been an unsung private for that matter—decided that wrestling would fill the bill so far as entertainment went.

Whoever it was that made that decision to entertain tired and homesick soldiers with wrestling bouts, actually created William Muldoon's career.

Men in command with some idea of training, probably West Pointers, were sent through the different commands to pick out the fellows best calculated to put up a wrestling argument. There was no passing Muldoon by. He was one of the first selected for even then he had built up an entirely new reputation as a powerful young man.

Those army bouts brought him additional fame. Soon the word went all down the line that a super-man-boy had come trooping down from the Belfast hills. Competition became hot. There were company champions and company challengers. There were first, second, third and even fourth and fifth flight wrestlers. Some of them probably made husky young Muldoon chuckle inwardly. His had been a hard school of physical perfection. When he took hold or others took hold of him in a soldier wrestling bout, they knew that a genuine athlete had come to grips.

Muldoon often spoke of those bouts and pointed out the fact that it was the cheapest form of amusement the army men could get.



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Baseball and football and other forms of sport required equipment. Wrestling was just wrestling, without overhead or contingent funds.

Muldoon ever was proud of the part he played in creating the desire for wrestling among the Union soldiers. He was always improving his style. Most of it came naturally but when some fellow from the cities loomed up before him with an entirely new hold or an idea, Muldoon, like Jim Corbett in his boxing teens, made it a part of his box of tricks and improved upon it wherever he could.

Of course the side-line—the war—had its thrills, too. Muldoon saw plenty of action. He must have come back without once being wounded. At least, he never spoke of it and the superb body which later was to amaze the theatre-going public because of its faultlessness gave no evidence of Muldoon's having had a rendezvous with a minie ball.

He carried the mail over the same route Phil Sheridan took when he came tearing along on his black charger, the day before the beloved general made his historic ride.

Muldoon was bringing up the mail through a dense fog the day before, the same fog which the Rebels had used as a natural smoke-screen to lavish wrack and almost ruin on the Union troops at that point.

Years afterwards, always, Muldoon said that he still could hear the shouts of the stragglers in retreat, as they turned and bucked up for Phil Sheridan's sake.

When the war was over, Muldoon returned to New York and worked at odd jobs for a time. His first was driving a horse and cart from 3 a.m. to 3 p.m. at $12 a week. His next was tossing hogsheads and anvils as a longshoreman on the docks of the Hudson and East Rivers.

One day he noticed a longshore colleague suffering from a black eye, and learned that he had come by it in a boozing den on West Houston Street, where the patrons put up purses of $5 for the winner of boxing bouts.

The red-headed stevedore's first financial and social eminence was $3. The next time he reported to the boozing den he noticed that wrestling bouts were going on. For some strange reason, probably because it lasted longer, wrestling paid more than boxing in those days. The purse was $10, of which $7 went to the winner.

Soon he was wrestling regularly in the back room of the sporting taverns and dens all over town: Harry Hill's, at Houston and Crosby Streets; Owney Geoghegan's "Bastile on the Bowery"; The Allen's "Bal Mabille," on Bleecker Street, and other sporting hang-outs of the gas-lit era.

He kept his job on the docks and on off nights he attended Cooper Union Institute. As a fixture at Hills, he met many of the leading

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men of the day: P. T. Barnum, James Gordon Bennett, the younger; Richard K. Fox, proprietor of "The Police Gazette," and even Thomas A. Edison, one of whose first electric light installations was in the establishment and brought about its later name: "Harry Hill's Electric Light Hall." In his early days as a wrestler, Muldoon also became acquainted with a large number of criminals, principally confidence men and bunco steerers. And it was to Hill's that he was later to bring John L. Sullivan for his first match in New York.

The Franco-Persian War broke out and young Muldoon crossed the ocean and joined the French army in the quest for new thrills. Between battles he found time to show the French soldiers what he knew of wrestling. Graeco-Roman was the rage in the Old World at the time and Muldoon studied every angle of that branch of grappling.

It was James Gordon Bennett who gave Muldoon the idea of taking up wrestling as a profession. Watching him in a Paris gymnasium, he said:

"You are a wonderful athlete, Muldoon, and if you concentrate on Graeco-Roman you will be the best man in the world."

That bit of advice from the noted publisher was taken seriously and before Muldoon was through with that same sport, he had become the best man in the world at it and had down every athlete who dared challenge him.

When Muldoon returned to America, he decided to join the New York Police Department. That was in 1876. There was a popular song of the time: "Muldoon, the Solid Man," written by Ned Harrigan (of Harrigan and Hart), with which he was to be identified all his life. The song was not written about him, however, but about a fictional Muldoon.

However, the sorrel-topped patrolman lost little time in making himself known. One of his first acts after stepping into harness was to organize the Police Athletic Association, with headquarters in a gymnasium in West Thirty-fourth Street. He concentrated on wrestling, appearing in the drinking halls on his nights off.

Muldoon was stationed in Oak Street, where he had quite a reputation as a fearless cop. Soon his fame as an unusual wrestler spread through the department and Jim Gaffney, champion of the force, went looking for the young bucko who was invading his domain.

He found him and wound up on the flat of his back in jig time. This was the real beginning of Muldoon's career as a wrestler.

Fred Bauer and Andre Christol were his next victims. So well did Muldoon progress, that he was then matched with Thebaud Bauer, for the championship. That bout took place on January 19, 1880 at Gilmore's Gardens, where later Stanford White's Madison Square Garden was built, and in best two out of three falls, Muldoon



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emerged the victor and the Graeco-Roman title holder. He also received a handsome gold medal donated by "The Spirit of The Times." Muldoon weighed 204 pounds, nearly ten pounds over his best weight and the Frenchman scaled 180. The National Police Gazette, commenting on the bout, said:

*"Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew. But the Solid Man was not in a melting mood that night and so the heretofore Right Bauer was Left."*

Muldoon and Prof. William Miller wrestled for the title in Gilmore's Garden in April, 1880, and that bout, which started on Monday at 8:45 p.m., lasted for nine hours and 35 minutes without either gaining a fall. Muldoon asked Miller to finish the match in a private dressing room without any officials present, but Miller refused.

In 1881 Muldoon resigned from the Police Department to devote all his time to wrestling, and in January of that year, came the first of three epic wrestling struggles with Clarence Whistler, the "Kansas Demon." The first of these great bouts took place at the Terrace Garden Theatre of New York City and went eight hours to a draw.

Ed Van Every, Muldoon's biographer, in his splendid book, "Muldoon, the Solid Man," records the first Muldoon-Whistler match as follows:

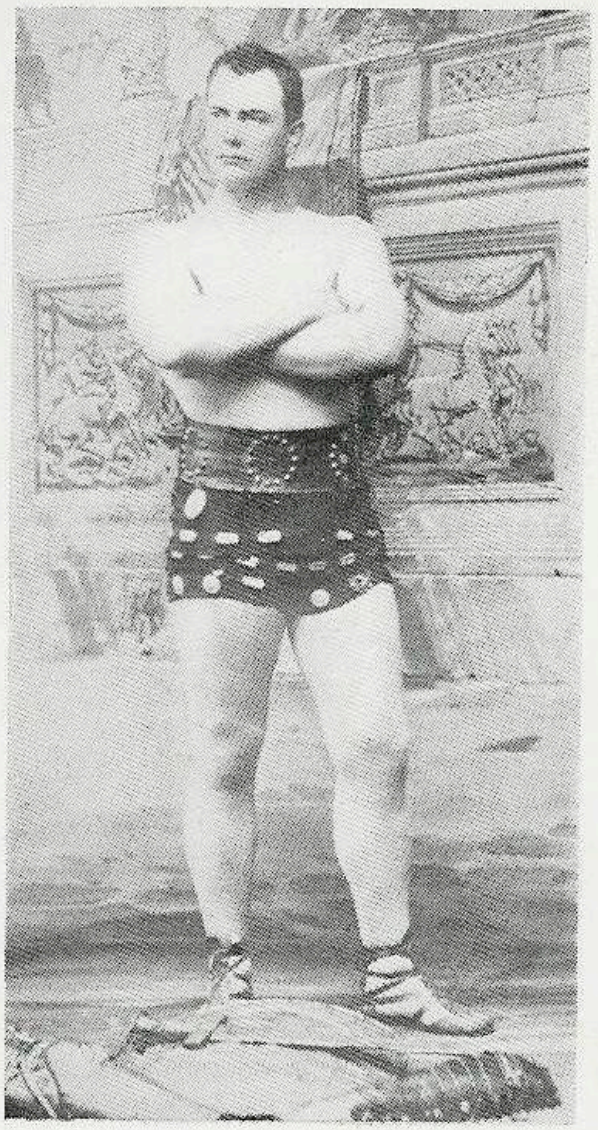
"Under the conditions of the contest, the men were to wrestle for one hour, but if at the end of the time limit there was no fall, then they were each permitted to have ten minutes rest period at the end of every hour after which the bout was to be resumed. The contest got under way at 8:45 and when the men took their rest period, Whistler seemed the stronger.

Though Muldoon was regarded as a fast man for a heavyweight wrestler, he was no match for his rival when it came to agility. Whistler carried the attack to Muldoon with bewildering speed.

Going into the fourth hour, Muldoon found himself pretty well used up while Whistler was still surprisingly fresh and confident. When the fifth hour of wrestling got under way, Whistler rushed his man, caught him about the body and forced him to the mat and Muldoon had to struggle hard to keep from being turned on his back. When he found his variety of holds and pressures would not budge the champion, Whistler resorted to the most painful trick of all, and for a considerable part of the next three hours, Muldoon was the victim of this extreme torture.

With the top of his head, Whistler proceeded deliberately to bore away at the back of Muldoon's body just below the neck until he was grinding the latter's face into the mat that covered the center of the stage. And while holding his man in this position, Whistler, with the aid of his toes and his legs, pried Muldoon about, inches at a

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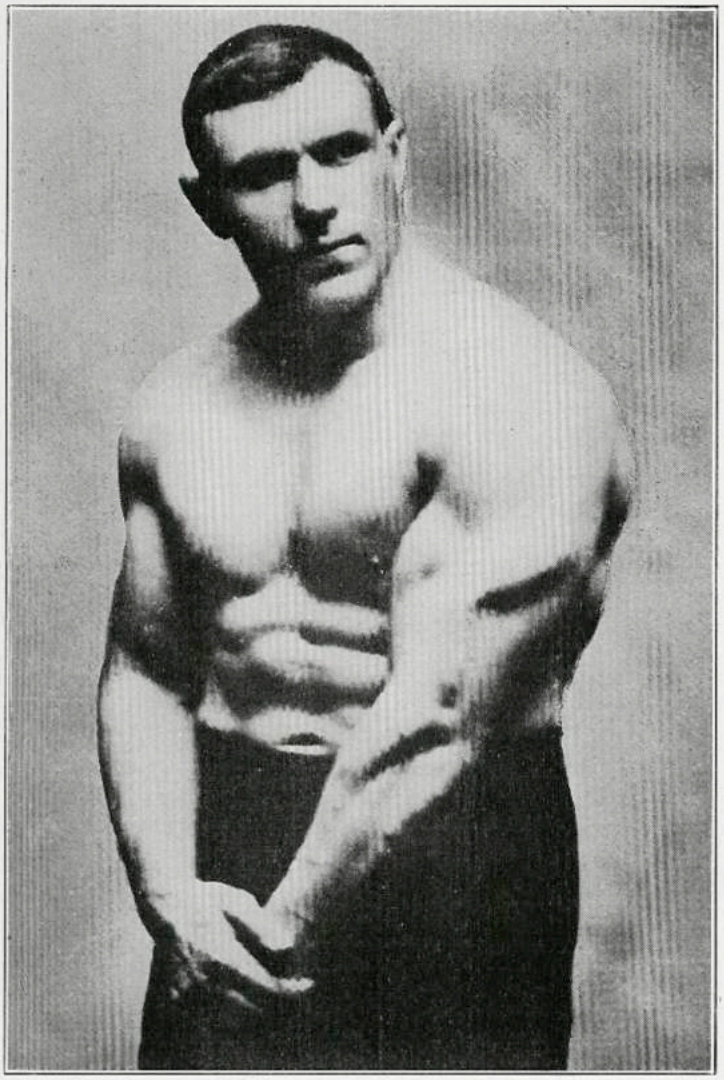
William Muldoon as "The Roman Gladiator."


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Frank Gotch awaiting call to face Hackenschmidt in Chicago match.

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George Hackenschmidt's powerful muscular development.


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The worried-looking Hackenschmidt entering the ring for return engagement with Gotch. His handlers are Dr. Roller (left) and Americus who is standing at the side of Jack Curley, the promoter.

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time. The champion endured this with Spartan-like fortitude, plainly trying to conserve something of his own strength until Whistler had exhausted some of his tremendous energy.

But it seemed as though there was no limit to the stamina of the challenger. During the fifth hour, Muldoon took the aggressive but once.

He heaved Whistler off, struggled to his feet and they locked hands. This time the nimble Whistler evaded a hold by an eel-like wriggle, and now he had Muldoon in a combination arm and neck clamp and was able to bend the champion back until it seemed he was in danger of having his neck broken.

Muldoon finally tore loose by a Herculean effort, but right on top of this torturing embrace, he fell into a headlock which was applied for several minutes until just a minute or two before the hour was up. The champion had discovered that Whistler still had much in the way of reserve strength. Still the thought of defeat never entered into Muldoon's head.

Whistler started off the sixth hour with the same savage aggressiveness; and it was now that he came up with his hair saturated with ammonia. As he bored away with his head at the champion's neck, face and chin and then at the open wound on his back, Muldoon was in such intense pain that he was exasperated into a mad rage and the battling bordered on the savage.

"Whistler fought just as fiercely as Muldoon, as they stood with their heads together like a couple of goring bulls. The challenger made a slip as he grabbed at the champion's perspiration-covered body and he pitched to the floor on his back.

Muldoon pounced down on him, but by a lightning turn, Whistler evaded danger by a hair-breadth and was able to get himself on all fours as Muldoon brought his weight over him. It took Whistler several minutes to worm loose, and before the hour was over, he was boring away again at Muldoon's neck and ploughing him about the stage despite protests from the champion's seconds.

And so the struggle went on until just before four o'clock in the morning when the lights went out in the house as the proprietor turned off the gas as the only means of putting an end to the protracted battle. Then everyone hurried down to the bar-room.

Muldoon and Whistler each protested that he didn't want the bout to end in a draw and that each was anxious and willing to finish the match under any conditions. There was some talk of hiring a private room and continuing to fight it out to a finish, but finally the lights in the bar-room were also put out and all had to leave the place.

Whistler's left ear was partly torn off from pulling out of severe headlocks, while the champion's hide was raw from mat burns.

Their second match, held in San Francisco, was also a draw, as


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was their third, staged in the Pavilion of San Francisco, on November 1, 1883, for the gate money, a side bet of $1,000 and the title. After four hours of terrific struggles, just as keenly fought as was the first, Muldoon broke Whistler's collarbone and he could not go on. The match was declared a draw by the referee.

Whistler was the most formidable opponent in Muldoon's career and the bouts between them were among the classics of all time in American wrestling history. Discussing these contests with *The Ring* Magazine Editor a year before he died, Muldoon, in defense of an article that had given him the worst of the proceedings, dictated the following statement:

"I am convinced Whistler could not have thrown me and I do not think I could have beaten him. He was a wonderful man, and very difficult to handle. In our bout in New York City we wrestled nine hours and 35 minutes without getting a fall. Whistler fought like a demon, and very early in the contest I felt confident he could not defeat me, and I relinquished all hope of throwing him.

"In getting out of a neck lock I had fastened on him, Whistler partially tore off his left ear and the left side of his face was swollen to the size of a boxing glove. One of his fingers also was broken. I did not escape injury, for Whistler had used his head as a battering ram against my breast, until it was skinned and bleeding.

"But this was not all. One of Whistler's seconds resorted to a fiendish scheme. He rubbed ammonia on Whistler's head, and when that came into contact with my quivering flesh, the torture I endured can be imagined. Despite our condition, we doggedly stuck to each other until the middle of the tenth hour when both being too weak to continue, the referee called the bout a draw. Our second bout also was a draw.

"Our next meeting was in San Francisco, in 1883, and although I really won the contest, through Whistler being unable to continue due to an injury, the referee declared it was a draw. I have always considered it rare good fortune that I escaped with my life on that occasion, as there was in attendance a desperate gang of toughs, led by a Ned Burns, who had bet their money on Whistler to win.

"I was warned previous to the bout that a scheme had been arranged whereby I would be pushed off the platform among the toughs, who would cripple me. I won the first fall with a half-Nelson in six minutes. When we went on for the second fall I noticed Whistler was trying to crowd me to the spot where the gang was stationed. Finally we came to the ring floor and rolled off the platform right among the toughs. Hardly had we landed, when I received a kick in the eye that closed the optic completely.

"I made no comment, knowing it would be useless, and went on with the bout. I finally got a body clutch on Whistler, lifted him

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high in the air and dashed him to the ring floor with all the force I could summon.

"He arose and in renewing the attack, fell against me, and I realized he was hurt. He clung to me, saying: 'Bill, I'm hurt.'

"Whistler finally released his hold and gave up the struggle. His left collar bone was broken, and his arm was hanging down to his knee. Whistler was advised to relinquish the match, but declared he would die in the ring first.

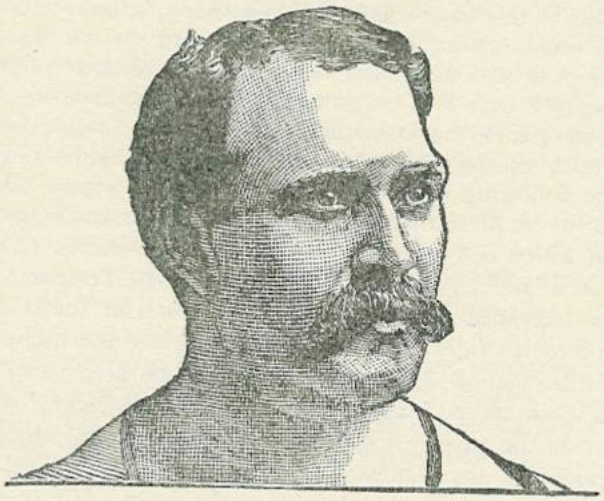
"I then stepped forward and said:

" 'Gentlemen, Mr. Whistler has been unfortunate enough to break his collar bone. I will take no advantage of a crippled man, although he is game enough to go on with the match. I admire his pluck and will say he is the best opponent I ever met.'

"I then offered Whistler $1,000 to relinquish the match, but he declined. The referee finally spoke up:

" 'This has been a square contest. Each man has won a fall, and one of the contestants is unable to continue with safety to himself. Under the circumstances I will declare the match a draw.'

"As a matter of fact, the referee was all wrong, as in boxing or wrestling, a contestant who receives an injury from a fall or blow and is unable to continue, loses the decision, and I should have been declared the victor," concluded Muldoon.



James Quigley, a muscular wrestler from Ireland.



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Chapter IV

# Muldoon Put to the Test

IN the same year of his second meeting with Clarence Whistler, the wrestling championship was twice defended by William Muldoon against Edwin Bibby. The latter, though he had proved easy for the champion in their first meeting three years previously, was generally regarded, next to Whistler, as the most dangerous of Muldoon's rivals for the wrestling supremacy. In their first match in New York, Bibby had been but a short time in this country. He had come here as the catch-as-catch-can middleweight champion of England and was not yet practiced in the Graeco-Roman style.

Though he weighed only about 160, thirty or more pounds less than Muldoon, who towered half a head above him, Bibby, after he became proficient as a Graeco-Roman wrestler, could hold his own with Whistler, Bauer and the best of them. His athletic fame became such that for a time he was in the employ of P. T. Barnum, giving exhibitions in the latter's "theatre of wonders." The two contests which make this chapter were both waged in San Francisco in a period of slightly over six weeks and are counted among Muldoon's outstanding matches. In the first of these Coast bouts Muldoon had his courage put to an extremely severe test.

Muldoon at this time was making his headquarters in San Francisco and was wrestling handicap matches with various opponents in nearby cities as part of an athletic carnival. In between those exhibitions he took part in a number of genuine championship matches, which were treated as important events in the Golden Gate City. He had taken up the Bibby challenge around the middle of July, and under the following conditions: They were to wrestle two hours, one hour to be Graeco-Roman and the other at catch-as-catch-can style, and with a rest period between of twenty minutes. This meeting was in a building known as the Metropolitan Temple.

Now it happened that in a bout at San Jose, Muldoon dislocated the thumb of his right hand. Three days before the Bibby match a serious inflammation developed and the thumb became so sore the slightest touch caused acute agony and the hand became practically useless. On the advice of doctors the dislocation was blistered, and by the night of the contest the inflammation had spread and the flesh was raw from the thumb joint to the wrist. His friends tried in every way to persuade the champion not to go through with the match until a later date but he refused.

"I will not disappoint those who have counted on seeing the match



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tonight, and," gritting his teeth, "if I cannot throw Bibby, then I'll never be thrown myself."

Muldoon kept his word. But what he went through in those two hours few could endure, and his face was contorted in pain in spite of himself. Not only was there the pain of his hurt, but there was no little hissing when he was at times forced by his injury to go strictly on the defensive.

Always sensitive to the extreme, he spurred himself to a supreme effort and managed to get his man in a position for a fall, but, with his right hand of no help, he was compelled to let his opponent escape, and the note of disapproval became more pronounced than ever. Then he came down to the front of the ring and raised his hand for silence. And the grim look on his face was such and there was something in his presence so commanding that they listened as he explained his predicament. They cheered him and there was no more hissing.

Bibby, having won the toss, elected to try the Graeco-Roman test for the first hour. The reason was obvious: if he could put the champion's shoulders to the mat in sixty minutes, then the title was his, and he figured to make his bid while he was at his best. He knew that when it came to endurance and stamina the champion had proven himself unbeatable time and again.

With a strength belied by his lithe appearance and an agility that was to be given even more extraordinary display in the second match, Bibby had little trouble escaping Muldoon's holds, and he worked on the champion desperately with every hold known to wrestling science. But the champion was too powerful and his spirit too high and proud for him to succumb to the terrific attack.

When the hour was up, Bibby's followers were jubilant. While their man had missed capturing the title, they were sure he would win their bets for them, as the next bout was at Bibby's favorite style and one at which Muldoon was by no means adept. But Muldoon surprised them in this second hour, even though having the use of but one hand by withstanding his opponent's assault in such manner that he was seldom in serious danger of being thrown.

About six weeks later, when they met again, it was under conditions that made for a fair test. This time the protracted argument as to their respective abilities was decisively settled. They had it out under a big tent that was thrown up on McAllister and Jones Streets, close to the site of what was then the new city of San Francisco. Within this tent, which covered an area of 80 by 230 feet, a crowd of 3,000 was gathered about an elevated twenty-four-foot square canvas covered and padded and with "six electric jets" throwing a poor light over the scene.

In that match, the conditions called for the men to wrestle two hours



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under Graeco-Roman rules, and if but one fall was scored in that time, the winner of the fall was to be the winner of the match. Bibby took advantage of his superior speed and darted to every side, worrying his man with a ceaseless aggressiveness. His abnormal agility was put in evidence before the match was many minutes under way. Muldoon clamped on a neck hold that looked dangerous, but Bibby twirled his body with a sort of pinwheel effect and somersaulted clear over the champion's back, landing on his feet like a cat.

Muldoon charged his man, and after considerable fiddling about, he nipped the Briton with a bodyhold and dashed him to the canvas. To the surprise of the spectators, the challenger bounced off the floor like a rubber man and again landed on his feet. This feat was duplicated a minute or so later.

After that, Bibby manoeuvred around the champion with such speed that he managed to get a neckhold, with which he bent Muldoon to the floor. But on the floor, Muldoon gave a splendid display of his tremendous strength, arching his body first on one elbow and then the other and twisting himself loose and to his feet. On another occasion, with a sudden lurch of his massive frame, he sent Bibby sprawling as though he had landed unexpectedly on a springboard. Bibby then came back himself with a show of strength by suddenly lifting the champion several feet and crashing him to the floor. And so the strenuous work kept up for the entire first hour without a fall being counted for either man.

After a rest of fifteen minutes, the battle was resumed. Bibby tried more desperately than ever to bring his man down in a quick do-or-die effort as it became plain that Muldoon was the stronger and that his strength was beginning to tell. The match became more exciting than ever "and the packed gathering swayed and moved almost in unison with the movements of the wrestlers."

Now the champion seemed to be the more speedy of the two. Four times in succession he lifted the Briton clear of the floor and each time Bibby doubled his legs and with an upward jerk of his arm, "glided out of the champion's bear-like hug as though he was a greased eel." The quotations are from the San Francisco *Examiner* of Sept. 5, 1883.

"But the finish was coming nearer and nearer. Bibby is drawn into a neck hold from which there is no escape for all his desperate and tricky struggling. He is forced down and his shoulders are within inches of the floor. The judges and the referee are on the floor almost on top of the contestants as Bibby is pressed further down. Referee Jordan, however, refuses to allow the fall, claiming the champion's arm is between the challenger's shoulder and the mat."

Muldoon was a bit nettled at the verdict, but he tore at Bibby again and with a vicious neckhold jerked the Briton's body over in a com-

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plete semi-circle and jammed him prone to the floor. This time there was no doubt that a legitimate fall had been registered. There still remained 20 minutes and 23 seconds of the second hour, in which Bibby might even the match. The Briton put everything he had in his try to turn the tables after another rest of fifteen minutes, but his best efforts hardly budged the champion.

This victory gave Muldoon the $1,000 stake and three-fifths of the gate money, which amounted to $2,500. And with this victory he strengthened his claim to the Graeco-Roman wrestling championship, which, he announced from the stage, he stood ready to defend against all comers and for any amount of money.

Foreign champions from all over the world came to this country from time to time during the eighties and put Muldoon's abilities to the test.

There were Prof. Carlos Martino of Spain, said to be one of the greatest of the Old World wrestlers; Jules Rigal, styled as the champion of France, and Pietro Delmas, who was among those who disputed Rigal's claim to that honor; also Andre Christol and Bisamos, two more French challengers; Donald Dinnie, a Scotch athlete; Tom Cannon, who like Bibby, hailed from England; Carl Abs, among the best of the various German challengers; Sebastian Miller, the Swiss strong man, whose specialty of breaking cobblestones with his fist became one of the feature acts of the Muldoon show; Matsada Sorakichi, a Japanese, discovered by Richard K. Fox, and many others.

Over all these Muldoon scored victories with the exception of Abs. The latter came to this country in 1885 credited with being the champion of Europe, and he proved himself a man of tremendous strength and bulk and was well sponsored. He is supposed to have been put to a private test in Clarendon Hall, New York, in which Muldoon was backed to throw the German inside of ten minutes, a feat which he failed to accomplish.

The two were matched for a public contest for a side bet of $500, and they met in Irving Hall, New York, on May 18, which was shortly after the arrival here of Abs. It was a time limit match of two hours and was decided a draw. Muldoon went into the fray with an injured wrist, the German fought strictly on the defensive, and no fall was scored. Abs, who was engaged for a match with Joe Acton in Philadelphia shortly after, left very suddenly for Europe without keeping this engagement.

Less than a month previously, Muldoon had wrestled Sorakichi in a handicap match in Irving Hall. It was in that contest that Muldoon suffered the injury to his wrist and he failed dismally in the task of throwing the Jap five times in an hour. They had had a previous


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meeting in Chicago, on July 26, 1884, under rather interesting circumstances.

On behalf of Sorakichi, Fox challenged Muldoon to a match for a side bet of $500. The Chicago meeting was the result. The Jap, who had a medal bestowed on him for lifting a record number of times an enormous club known as the Police Gazette Club, was a squat individual whose wrestling technique in the downing of his man was to butt him out of the ring with a sort of billygoat rush.

When Jere Dunn visited the Gazette offices to call Fox's bluff, the champion's manager insisted on a contest in which the goat tactics be barred. After much discussion Muldoon had his manager advise that Sorakichi was welcome to work anyway he pleased.

The bout took place in the Chicago Music Hall, and it had been so well advertised through the controversy, that it drew quite a crowd. The affair proved to be nothing in the way of a contest. In the first bout, which was in the Japanese style, Sorakichi endeavored to butt the champion over, only to be picked up and dashed down with much force in less than one minute.

The Jap lasted about thirty seconds in the Graeco-Roman test. Muldoon did not exert himself to any extent in the catch-as-catch-can tussle and this time Sorakichi lasted twenty minutes, the champion apparently wanting to give the crowd something in the semblance of a run for its money.

Bixamos was wrestled in the baseball park at New Orleans in May of the same year, so it can be seen that Muldoon was covering quite a bit of territory in the year 1884. Bixamos, who had been something of a fizzle as a fistic aspirant, had gained some prestige as a grappler on the strength of several lively bouts with Christol. Muldoon registered two falls in less than fifteen minutes over this opponent.

Rigal made his bid against the champion at San Francisco and was downed for two straight falls in six minutes under one hour, and in what was described as a most interesting match. But the most interesting incident of the encounter seems to have happened in the first round of the match when, as the champion had the Frenchman caught into a very good hold, some bloodthirsty; patron of the Union Hall gallery yelled for Muldoon to "Break the Frenchy's neck!"

Muldoon thereupon released his hold on his opponent, came down to the front of the platform with much dignity, and addressing himself in the direction of the gallery, and in a tone that effectually stopped all raillery, said:

"If any more such remarks are made this match will stop. I am not here to break the neck of any man."

Can you imagine any present-day athlete, and a wrestler in particular, getting away with any thing of that sort? What is more, no

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one but a Muldoon could have done the trick even in his time. Decidedly, he must have had a way with him!

Martino achieved the rare feat of winning two falls in a best three out of five match for the championship. And as it was the first two that the Spaniard won and Muldoon took the next three bouts rather quickly, it follows that there was many a hint that the affair was nothing more than a hippodrome.

An examination of old clippings from the Commercial Gazette and other newspapers of Cincinnati, where this contest took place, would give the impression that something out of the ordinary in the way of wrestling thrills was provided on this occasion, and that those who witnessed the match were not among the skeptically inclined.

In the very first bout, the Spanish athlete was hurled to the floor four times in succession and head foremost, but each time he bounded back to his feet with a catlike agility. Muldoon appeared a bit taken by surprise by his opponent's nimbleness, and before he realized what was happening, Martino closed in on the champion and had him nipped in a half-nelson. They were carried to the floor in the struggle that followed with Muldoon underneath and in such a way, both shoulders touched the mat. This bout lasted ten minutes. The second was only half that time and the champion was brought down with an armlock.

Muldoon now seemed to become very cautious, and he had need to, as another fall meant the loss of his title. Within four minutes, the champion raised his opponent to his shoulder and then hurled him down with such violence that Martino was stunned and his condition was not helped when Muldoon's 195 pounds dropped on him. Martino did not come back in good shape and was an easy victim in the next two bouts.

Delmas was taken on at Washington, where Muldoon was to make his last appearance in the role of champion a few years later. Delmas was a poor sort of an opponent and so were most of the other self-styled champions who tackled Muldoon. The match with Dinnie, which took place in San Francisco, was interesting.

Modern wrestling, as compared to the titanic struggles of the misty past, is as tiddledywinks to tossing the caber. The caber, be it known, was a wooden pillar about the size of the ordinary telegraph pole, which braw Scots delighted to toss about the mundane sphere as if it were a piece of kindling wood. This naturally brings to the foreground the lithe figure of Donald Dinnie, champion of auld Scotland, and the greatest wrestler, Cumberland style, in the history of the mat. He weighed but 157 pounds, but was as quick as a flash, slippery as an eel, and determined as a bull terrier.

In 1884, he arrived at the decision that he could vanquish Muldoon, then the Graeco-Roman champion, but not at Muldoon's style of



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wrestling. Therefore, he proposed a mixed match, half Graeco-Roman and half Cumberland style. He was also a bit magnanimous, for he offered to win twice as many falls Cumberland style as Muldoon would capture Graeco-Roman. Graeco-Roman rules are well known, contestants not being permitted to take hold below the waist, and two points on the mat, both shoulders, to constitute a fall.

It becomes of interest to inspect the Cumberland rules. Here are a few:

"Contestants were required to stand chest to chest, each resting his chin on opponent's shoulder and each grasping the other about the body. Loosening the hold, loses the fall. When a contestant touches the floor with any part of the body except his feet, he loses the fall. When both men go to the floor, the first one to strike it loses the fall. Dog falls are to be wrestled over."

It is readily discernible that Dinnie had some reason to expect victory under the rules.

The agreement called for 30 minutes Cumberland style, to be followed by 30 minutes Graeco-Roman, only the actual time consumed to be counted. Dinnie laid 2 to 1 he would win the match. The contest took place in the Grand Opera House, San Francisco, which was jammed to the doors by a crowd that remained from 8 p. m. to 2 a. m., watching with deep interest the efforts of the noted gladiators.

Twenty-six falls were recorded, of which Muldoon won fifteen, and Dinnie eleven, Muldoon requiring 16 minutes and 45 seconds for his victories and Dinnie using 13 minutes and 46 seconds. Among the bouts captured by Muldoon was the fifth, at Cumberland style, which he won in 7 seconds, and also the twenty-third, at Cumberland style, the time being 5 minutes and 23 seconds.

The twenty-second fall marked the beginning of the end so far as Dinnie was concerned. Muldoon won that fall and two more in succession.

The twenty-fourth bout, Graeco-Roman, was a trying one for the game little Scot. Muldoon, sensing that his opponent was tiring, rushed in like a panther, seized Dinney by the head and shook it until the Scotchman was dizzy. Then Muldoon took a grip on the back of his opponent's neck and, putting his shoulder under Dinnie's chest, obtained an unbreakable lock. It was Muldoon's purpose to catapult Dinnie off his shoulder, and the consequences might have been serious.

Loath to injure his opponent, Muldoon, while holding the lock said to Dinnie: "Do you give up the fall?" "I give up the fall," said Dinnie, and Muldoon released his hold.

Dinnie managed to win the twenty-fifth fall, Cumberland style, but Muldoon captured the twenty-sixth in 2 minutes and 11 seconds, giving him the victory. Dinnie, of course, had an alibi, to the effect

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that he had tired himself at a Caledonian picnic the day previous, where he had tossed the caber too steadily. He said, however, that he would like to meet Muldoon in a match later on. Muldoon said he was willing, and would undertake to throw Dinnie twenty times in an hour Graeco-Roman style, for $1,000 a side but that match never took place.

Going into the late eighties such rivals as had been regarded as worthy of disputing Muldoon's claims to the wrestling supremacy were now being displaced by other worthy newcomers.

Bibby and Bauer were in virtual retirement. Miller had passed his best days by the time he returned from a stay of several years in Australia. And Whistler, probably the most dangerous rival of the lot, had been dead for several years. Tom Cannon, the Briton; Joe Acton and Evan Lewis, were now among the most noted of the new generation of Muldoon rivals.

Lewis, better known as "the Strangler," and who is not to be confounded with "Strangler" Ed Lewis of present-day prominence, was a cruel and really dangerous athlete. He had deliberately broken the ankle of one opponent and severely injured several others. But the original "Strangler" Lewis, though deservedly recognized as the catch-as-catch-can champion, never came to be very proficient as an exponent of the Graeco-Roman style.

Acton of Philadelphia had proven himself something of a whirlwind, but he was only a middleweight. Cannon was at his best as a Graeco-Roman artist. Muldoon disposed of this challenger in two matches fought within a few days of each other.

It was in the People's Theatre, Cincinnati, that the two encounters took place, each time before a packed house. August 18, 1888, was the date of the first struggle. The second match was due to the fact that there was considerable argument and some dissatisfaction over the deciding fall in the first one.

Muldoon took the aggressive in the first bout of the first match and while he had Cannon in dangerous straits there was no fall in the first fifteen minutes. After a short rest the tussle was resumed and the champion soon had his man in a combination half-Nelson and hammerlock.

Cannon was forced to bridge and then Muldoon, by a dexterous twist, secured a front double-Nelson and the Briton was forced to succumb. The time of the bout was eighteen minutes.

Again, in the second bout, the first quarter of an hour went by without result, but after the rest period Cannon assumed a strong offensive and worked on the champion with such vigor that Muldoon was forced into a defensive bridge. After a hard struggle Cannon got a lock from which his opponent was unable to escape, and he won the fall in twenty-one minutes.



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Cannon was giving an excellent account of himself in the third and deciding bout. He escaped from numerous threatening positions, but the finish came with surprising suddenness. Cannon had been compelled to bridge and in an effort to escape by rolling out of danger, it was claimed by the referee that both of the Briton's shoulders had touched the floor. Cannon and not a few of the spectators took noisy exception.

So when they came together three nights later, the show house was packed to capacity and more than 100 persons were crowded on the stage. It was believed that Muldoon had run into an opponent who could test his mettle. But this time Muldoon proved to the satisfaction of all present, and to the disgruntlement of his foe, just who really was the better man.

Cannon certainly made a fine show of aggressiveness and uncovered plenty in the way of genuine wrestling science. He secured several likely holds, one a full-Nelson, which for an instant made him look the winner. But the champion was in fine form and did not seem in the least distressed by the best the Englishman could unleash.

Muldoon gave a show of skill and strength that brought forth a veritable storm of applause. He hurled Cannon about like a sack of oats and broke holds with such an indifferent ease that the wonder was that the Briton managed to stave off defeat for sixteen minutes. "He jammed his man down," we read, "with an irresistible heave that seemingly threatened to push Cannon through the floor of the stage."

A rest of ten minutes did Cannon but little good. The fight seemed to have been pretty well taken out of him in the first bout. Muldoon gave him not a moment of rest and in slightly over five minutes Cannon was flattened out on the mat and completely done for.

The champion was accorded a tremendous ovation and the noise would not let up until he had signified his assent to their demands for a speech. Very graciously he explained that his foeman was not in the best of condition for the match, otherwise he would have been seriously extended. Cannon, however, felt his defeat so keenly that he walked off without shaking the hand of his conqueror.

Muldoon was now approaching a stage in his career as a wrestling champion where there was no rival who figured worthy enough to give him such opposition as would place his title of Graeco-Roman champion in jeopardy. However, there was a young German-American, Ernest Roeber, coming along. He had so impressed the champion that he was already attached to Muldoon's troupe of athletes. A few years later this young German-American was to succeed Muldoon as the champion.

How great an athlete was William Muldoon among the wrestlers

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past and present? In Graeco-Roman, which is probably the severest test in physical grappling and grips, a style that depends little on trickery in throwing an opponent off balance, or on torturing leg or toe hold, but is a matter of the extreme in strength and skill in the science of leverage and muscle control against the unimpaired power of the man before you—William Muldoon, if not the greatest of all exponents of this type of wrestling of which he was the champion for more than ten years, at least, was second to no other man past or present.

He was king in a day when the sport was at its height. And while it may be that there were some whom even Muldoon could not have downed in a finish match of two out of three falls, none of them, there is good reason to believe, could have so vanquished Muldoon.

Of course, there are insinuations of framed matches and hippodromes aimed at the Muldoon renown, but even if the character of the man did not make such charges absurd, it is safe to depend on the word of those in a position to know best, that such innuendo is without foundation. The nearest thing that might be open to question by distrusting is that it seems to have been a fact that "plant" matches were arranged as a part of the champion's barnstorming.

This is what is meant by a "plant." Several weeks in advance of the appearance of the champion at some particular town, a visitor would come along, who could easily be persuaded to admit that he was a great wrestler. Naturally, the question would come up as to whether he dared to tackle the great Muldoon. And, naturally, the answer would be that the visitor had no respect for Muldoon or any one else.

This was by way of setting the scene for the appearance of the champion, and also, in event of none of the local champions being able to screw up sufficient courage to tackle the great Muldoon, that there would be some sort of an opponent for the champion's exhibition. But where there was anything beyond a requisite showmanship in this, that is not plain. In fact, the matter would not be worth mention, only that it is the aim of this narrative to show that there is nothing in the life story of William Muldoon, that needs glossing over.

Out of these barnstorming jaunts came many stories of the adventures of the "Solid Man." It would take a bulky volume to carry them all, but one which had wide prominence at the time deserves space here.

One night out in Pueblo, related John Cudihee, who had wrestled the champion during one of his first trips West, Muldoon came across a weeping woman and three children sitting on the doorstep of a rather notorious combination gambling den and saloon. This incident also happened in the dark of night and had real ten, twenty and thirty cent drama touches.



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The woman in distress told Muldoon how her husband had taken their entire savings of more than $1,500, had gone into the gambling house the day before and had not been seen since. Muldoon told the woman to stay where she was until he had time to look into the matter. Into the place went Muldoon and finally found a man in a stupor whom he recognized from the wife's description as the one he was seeking. Muldoon succeeded in rousing him sufficiently to learn that he had been cleaned out. Then he went up to the proprietor of the place.

"I am Billy Muldoon," said the champion, looking his man square in the eye. "That man over there has been drugged and robbed and I am here to get back what belongs to him."

As he spoke, he grabbed the dive-keeper by the wrist and gave it a twist.

"I want a look into your safe," he said in answer to the man's protests, and he gave another little twist to the arm which brought a gasp of pain from the victim. Muldoon dragged him to the safe and found the door open. Inside lay a roll of bills with a rubber band around it. The proprietor made a grab for the money but another twist of the wrist quickly brought a change of mind.

Muldoon took the roll, grasped the robbed man and led him outside where the champion turned over both husband and money to the wife, and then departed without waiting for thanks or explanations.

One of the prominent victims of Muldoon's wrestling skill was none other than John L. Sullivan, the Boston Strong Boy. Sullivan was by no means a novice in wrestling science, as he and other bare knuckle fighters were permitted under London rules to mix wrestling with boxing.

The contest took place in the Gloucester, Mass., ball grounds in 1887, and drew a crowd of 2,000. At the outset, Sullivan tripped Muldoon and forced him to his side. The latter arose quickly, and taking a waist hold on the heavyweight champion, lifted him off his feet and slammed him to the ground with a violence that shook the earth. Sullivan intimated he would like to finish the battle, according to London rules, but the crowd rushed in and stopped the combat.



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Chapter V

# Muldoon's Contemporaries

WITH the story of William Muldoon, the first great American wrestling king completed, before starting the line of succession of title holders, we will give a short biographical sketch of Muldoon's contemporaries.

Clarence Whistler, who gained world fame through his five hour draw match with Muldoon, was a distant relative of the famous artist, James McNeil Whistler. He, like Muldoon, was an excellent actor as well as a wrestler and as such, he was able to spread the interest in the sport which he loved.

Whistler was born near Delhi, Ind., in 1856, from pure American stock. He came to New York a few months before John L. Sullivan had made his appearance as a boxer. Whistler had for his manager, Henry F. Jacoby, a past commander of the Reno Post of the G. A. R., and with Jacoby to guide him, Whistler set out to challenge the cream of the New York Police Department, which organization boasted of a fine lot of wrestlers, among whom Muldoon was the champion. In quick order, Whistler beat Quigley, Graeco-Roman title holder of the Police Department; threw H. M. Dupher, collar-and-elbow wrestler, American style, and Bauer, the Graeco-Roman champion of France. Following that, he defeated Lucien Marc, former French champion and then tackled Muldoon.

Whistler, in company with the late Maurice Barrymore, father of the famous theatrical family, went to Australia in 1885 and there defeated Dan Thomas, catch-as-catch-can, for the championship of the Antipodes. Soon thereafter he was attacked by pneumonia and died.

From a purely scientific point of view, Whistler was not a great wrestler. He knew little about the game up to his twenty-fourth year, but relied principally upon his great strength and agility. From the tip of his toes to the crown of his head, he was probably one of the most powerful men of modern times in all-around feats of strength—Sandow, St. Cyr, Ajax, Atilla and Curtis not excepted. He was 5 feet 8 inches in height and weighed 180 pounds.

By far one of the best wrestlers ever produced in collar-and-elbow style in Muldoon's time was John McMahon, born at Bakersfield, Vt., July 7, 1841. He stood 5 feet 10½ inches, and in condition scaled 185 pounds. He was the son of a hardy farmer who in his younger days enjoyed considerable repute as a wrestler; indeed, the family was noted for its physical qualities, as may be judged from the fact that Owen and Cox, both nationally known as trippers, were cousins




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of McMahon. The trippers were looked upon as great athletes in the old days.

McMahon never engaged in any but an agricultural pursuit and drifted almost unconsciously into the habit of wrestling, acquiring it as a study and keeping it as he grew to manhood.

His first public match was on June 23, 1861, with Peter English, at Port Henry, New York, for $100 a side which he won in eighteen minutes. Three months later, he vanquished High Fitzpatrick at the same place for $150 a side. Then he conquered among others, A. W. Store, Uzile Crickett, L. Doolin, James Craven, George Stone, E. Fox, E. Titus, W. M. Scoville, John Herrick, Captain John Haley, Homer Lane, Thomas Copeland, Perry Higby, Albert Ellis, J. Dunlap, and George Van Dyke.

On September 16, 1874, he went to San Francisco to wrestle W. M. Farrell, the champion of the Pacific Coast for $1,000 a side, winning after a desperate struggle of four hours duration. Next he defeated James Lopell of British Columbia in 1876.

On July 2, 1877 he defeated a gigantic lumberjack, and for a purse of $250 at Mendocino, Cal. This match was wrestled on the turf in the lumber woods and McMahon won in 31 minutes.

Dakota Bill was his next opponent on January 3, 1878, and McMahon won in 2 hours and 5 minutes. On November 23, 1878, he beat Colonel McLaughlin for $4,000 a side and the following year in New York City, he beat Prof. Miller in 12 minutes as did J. E. Owens a few months later. When he beat Owens, on August 16, 1879, he also carried with the victory the championship belt which Owens had won from McLaughlin.

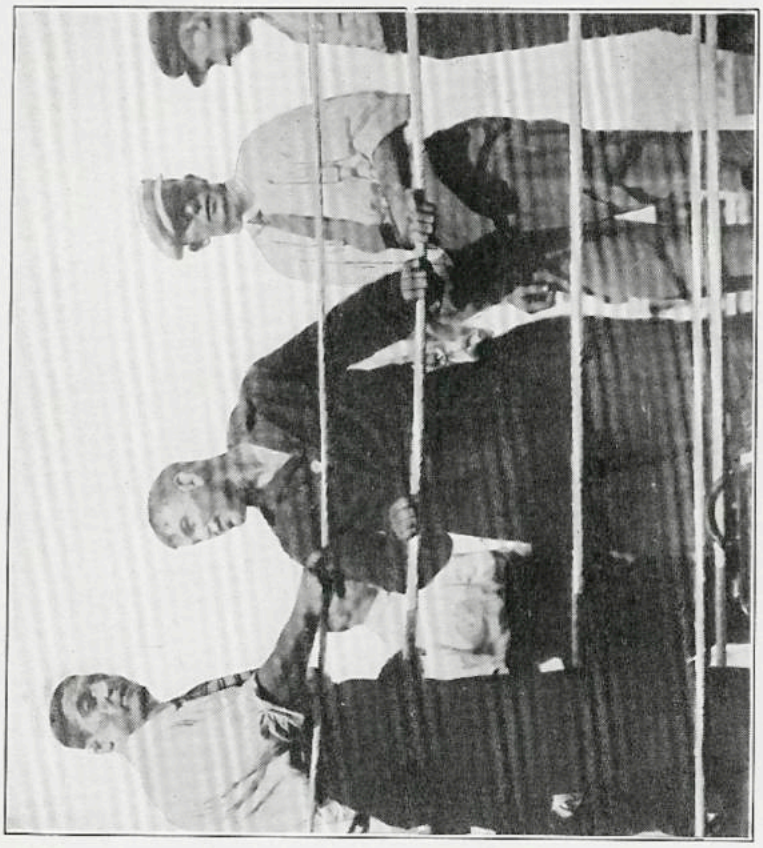
McMahon's last match was on March 16, 1880, when he wrestled H. M. Dufur for $1,000 a side and the world title. This bout was decided a draw after the men had wrestled for six hours without either gaining a fall.

Thus it will be seen that McMahon had an active career of twenty years—nothing unusual in those days.

Other stars of that period were Greek George and Tom Cannon and later they were joined by Evan Lewis, the original Strangler. Lewis was brought to Chicago, scene of his greatest bouts, by Tommy Gill, a Milwaukee railroad man.

Lewis for many years held his own when pitted against the best men in the country, and strangers from abroad came over to pit their skill and strength against him, only to be thrown, one after another. Tom Cannon, a noted English wrestler, considered a wonder in his day, came on to try conclusions, and was thrown rather easily. Farmer Burns, who had a great reputation throughout the West, fared no better, and the country grew fairly wild over Lewis and his wrestling ability.

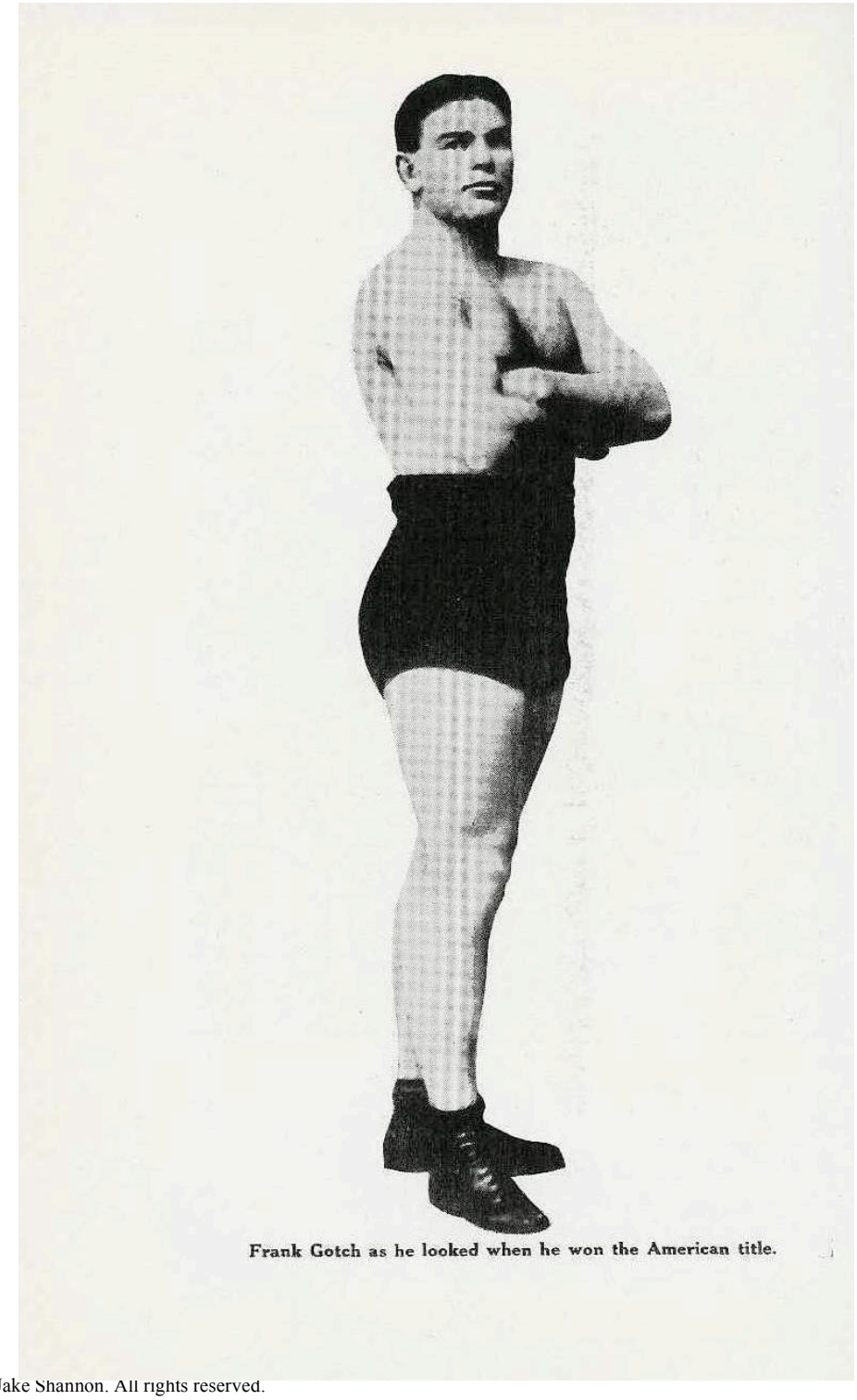
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Gotch, confident, surrounded by his seconds, Yussif Hussane, Jim Asbell and Emil Klank.

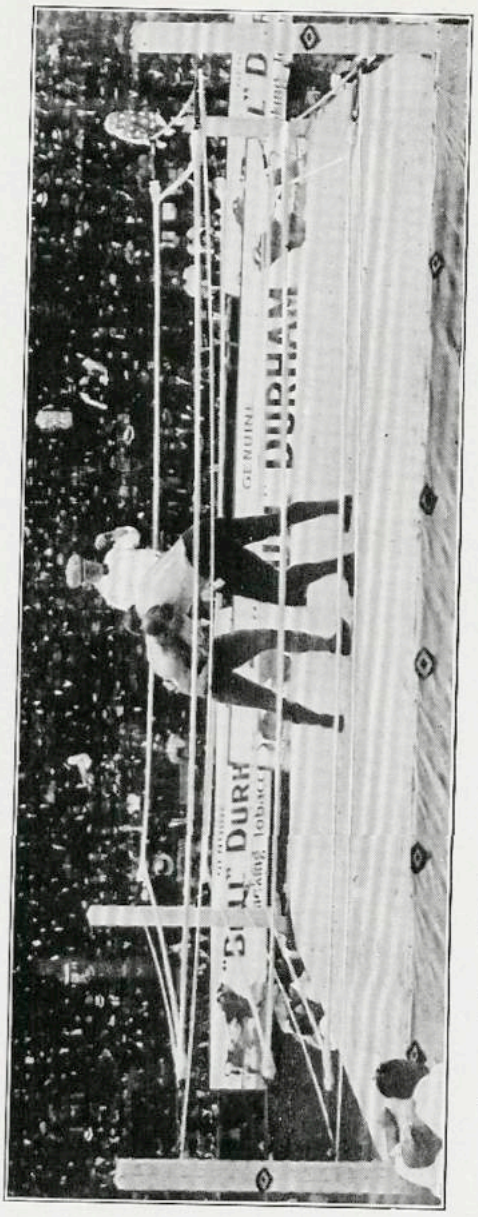


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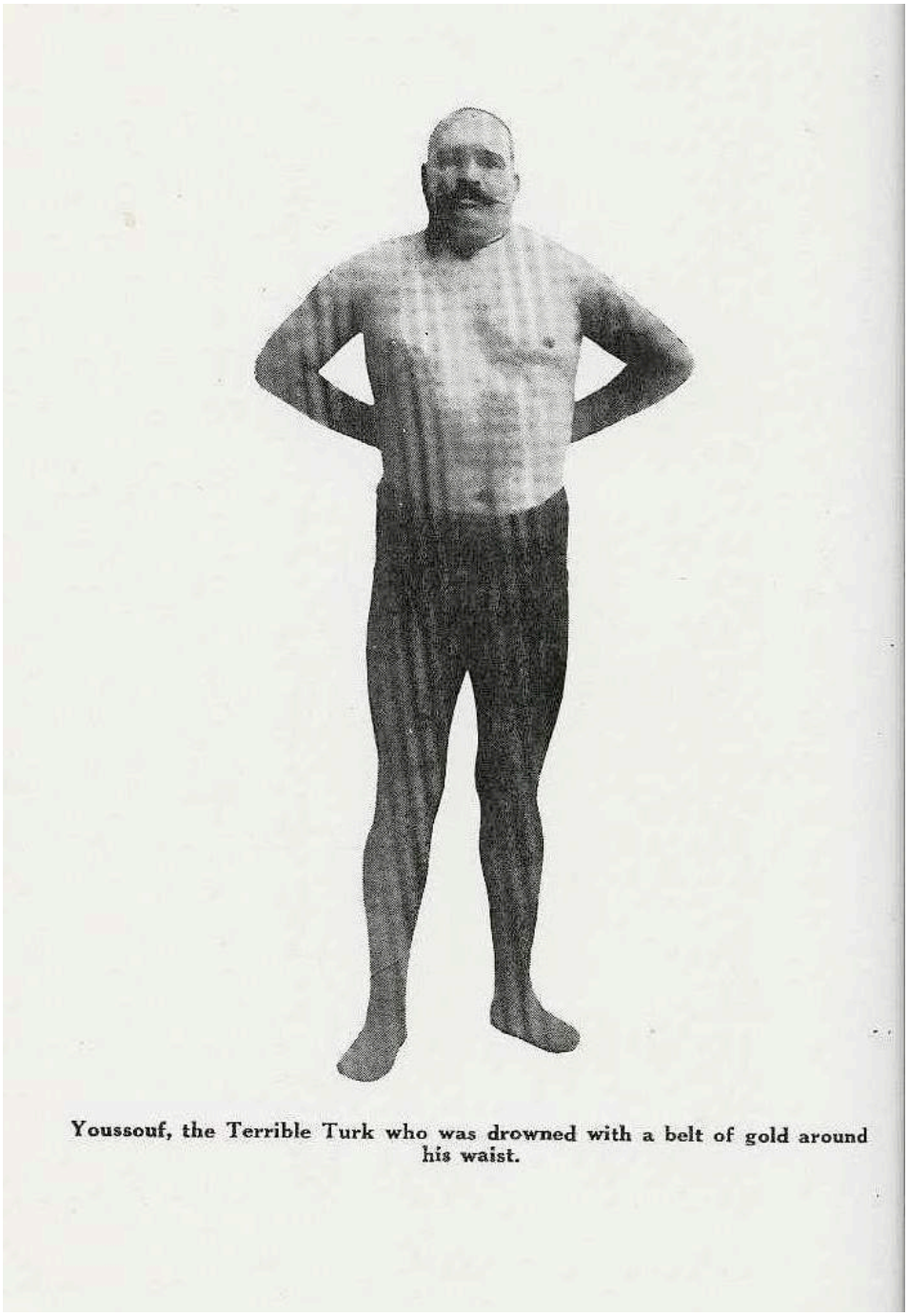
Frank Gotch as he looked when he won the American title.

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A general view of the famous return match between Frank Gotch (left) and George Hackenschmidt. Ed. W. Smith is the referee.


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**Youssouf, the Terrible Turk who was drowned with a belt of gold around his waist.**

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At that time there blew into the United States, Matsada Sorakichi, a Japanese, who had been throwing all comers in his native land, and who was heralded as a world beater. He challenged Lewis for a match, and the bout took place at Battery D Armory, Chicago, which was then the theatre of most of the important events in the wrestling and pugilistic line. Lewis fastened his famous strangle hold on the Jap and soon brought him to the carpet.

Matsada believed that, with the strangle hold barred, he could throw Lewis, and made another match, with the strangle hold eliminated. Central Music Hall, Chicago, was secured for the clash, it being the first time in history it had ever been leased for anything in the athletic line, and it proved to be the last. When the night of the match came, the hall was crowded to its utmost capacity, many people being turned away.

Harry Palmer, a well-known Chicago sporting writer, was agreed upon as referee, but the men had been wrestling only a few minutes when Lewis clutched the Jap's leg and began to twist it, calling on him to turn over, which the Jap for a time refused to do. People arose from their seats and began hailing Lewis as a brute and cried out to hang him.

R. L. Carey, a famed sports writer known as Hyder Ali, had been watching the match closely from the wings. Whether Palmer lost his head, or whether he was afraid, shall never be known, but the fact remains that he stood there, white in the face, while the whole house was in a turmoil, and it looked as though there might be trouble ahead.

At this juncture, "Parson" Davies stepped over to Carey and asked him to decide the match, saying that he was afraid there would be a riot unless something was done. Carey told him that Palmer was the referee, but that if he could not decide it, and would ask Carey to, he would do it. Palmer at once came over to Carey and made the request.

Stepping forward to the edge of the stage, Carey held up his hand to the crowd for quiet, and then informed them that catch-as-catch-can was just what the name implied, only in this case, the strangle hold had been barred, and that when the articles were being signed, Lewis had informed the Jap that this time he was going to twist his leg, to which Matsada had replied, "You twisty my leggee, me twisty your leggee, too," and that he would doubtless have done so had he gotten the chance.

That being the case, said Carey, he should award the first fall to Lewis in 18:20, and if the Jap was not on the stage at the end of twenty minutes, he should give Lewis the second fall and the match.

At the end of twenty minutes, the Jap failed to show up and Carey decided the match in Lewis' favor, amid hisses and cat calls from all parts of the hall. Carey was escorted out of the hall through the



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stage entrance by the police, and this action on their part doubtless saved him from bodily harm.

The next morning Carey was condemned by his own paper, the *Inter-Ocean*, for the decision he had rendered, and found himself walking the street, jobless, because of it. But he was soon sent for and installed in his old position, as his employer was assured that that was the only decision that Carey could have rendered under the conditions of the match. That night Carey had something of a strenuous time on the streets, however, and in one State Street resort, he would have been mobbed had not Bill Bradburn and Pat Killen come to his rescue in the nick of time.

The papers the following day came out with sensational statements about the Jap's leg being broken by Lewis, but those were made without investigation and were far from the truth. In company with the "Parson," Carey visited the Jap at his hotel. He limped a little, but had his leg been broken, he could not have put his foot on the ground as he did, but in less than two weeks, he was wrestling again, proving that his injuries were not as serious as had been stated.

It was shortly after this, that "Parson" Davies issued an offer to back Lewis in a catch-as-catch-can wrestling match against any man in the world, and one night there appeared in the office an Englishman who, in cockney dialect, announced his willingness to accept the defi in behalf of Jack Wannop, who, it appeared, had acquired a reputation on the other side of the pond. The "Parson" was sent for and a match was arranged for a stake of one thousand dollars a side, to be wrestled in Chicago.

It proved to be the biggest picnic that Lewis ever struck, as Wannop was but a toy in his hands and there were at least a dozen men in Chicago at that time that could have thrown him. The result was a great disappointment both to Wannop and his backer, and the latter soon returned to England, while Wannop drifted into the fighting game with just as mediocre success as in wrestling.

And now for the biographical sketch of several other notables who rated as top notchers prior to the rise of Frank Gotch.

Colonel J. H. McLaughlin ranked among the big shots in wrestling. He was born at Oriskany, Oneida County, N. Y., on June 8, 1844. His father was a Scotchman and his mother hailed from King's County, Ireland. He was six feet one inch and scaled 265 pounds, though most of his best matches found him weighing around the 230-pound mark.

He started his career at fifteen when he tackled a brawny Scot, Hiram McKee, twice his age, for a side bet of one hundred dollars, and won. Even at that age he scaled 185 pounds. Stung by defeat, McKee taunted his rival beyond endurance and finally drew McLaughlin into a tussle on the village green. After a brief engagement,

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McLaughlin threw his man with such violence that he broke McKee's leg and sent him to the hospital for many weeks.

In the fall of 1860, McLaughlin beat Luke Loucks at Oneida Castle, N. Y., for a side bet of one hundred dollars and then won seven more matches before he enlisted in the War of the Rebellion. He joined the 26th New York Infantry and was decorated several times for bravery and meritorious conduct and was promoted to a captaincy. Subsequently he was transferred to the 24th New York Cavalry and rose to the rank of major and later retired as a colonel.

During his enlistment, he gave exhibitions of wrestling and tests of strength and he was largely responsible for developing the sport in the service. In addition, his exhibitions and the competition which he organized among his men helped the morale of the soldiers. While in the army, he beat Duval Wilcox at Fort Lyon, Va., in 1861, the struggle lasting three hours, and then he threw Corporal Corrigan of the Twenty-seventh New York, whom he vanquished at Fort Ellsworth.

McLaughlin's first match after the war was with Louis Ainsworth at Newark, N. J., Driving Park for one thousand dollars a side and the championship of America, and McLaughlin won easily. In March, 1867, he beat Homer Lane of New York at Mechanics' Hall, Utica, N. Y., in a bout for the title with one thousand dollars side bet, and again won.

On September 1 of the same year, he again met Lane at Devereaux Hall, Oneida, under the same conditions and suffered his first defeat and the loss of the crown. But he didn't remain an ex-champion very long, for in 1870, a tourney was arranged in Detroit, Mich., in which, for the first time, a championship belt was offered, and all the stars, eager to win the trophy, the first ever put up in America, entered. It was open to all collar-and-elbow wrestlers.

The tourney opened at the Young Men's Hall with eighteen contestants taking part, but only two, E. P. Herrongton of Detroit and Barney Smith, an engineer on the Great Western Railway of Canada, faced McLaughlin and both were easy victims. McLaughlin won the belt and with it he regained the American wrestling laurels, as Lane was eliminated earlier in the tournament.

On February 14, 1875, McLaughlin wrestled Michael Whalen, alias Corduray, a big policeman from San Francisco, at Platt's Hall in that city for a side bet of $2,500 and McLaughlin won two consecutive falls. He and his backers carried back East more than $15,000 which they had won on the match.

McLaughlin did not wrestle again until January 4, 1876, when he defeated J. J. Benjamin of Washington, D. C., at the Detroit Opera House, winning in straight falls. During 1876, the champion engaged in three contests with Jacob H. Martin, the Butcher Boy of Ypsilanti,


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Mich. The first, at the Detroit Opera House for five hundred dollars a side and the title, broke up in a row and was decided a draw. The second, at Whitney's Opera House, June 29, terminated similarly after the men had wrestled until sunrise without either gaining a fall. That bout lasted almost six hours. The third and last took place at the Central Park Garden, New York City, on October 16, and in that McLaughlin broke the ice by winning the first and third fall and retaining his championship.

After this, McLaughlin remained around New York for several weeks during which he appeared on the stage and in the music halls. On December 7, 1876, he gave an exhibition with Charles Murphy at Harry Hill's theatre and he won in straight falls before a packed house. In that contest, McLaughlin severely injured his ankle and it was that injury that caused his loss of the title when he clashed with James Owens of Fairfield, Vt., in a match announced as for the championship. The bout took place on December 28 and McLaughlin, limping, couldn't keep his balance and fell a victim to Owens at the Music Hall of Boston.

Although he lost the crown, McLaughlin didn't forfeit the belt he had won at Detroit, as it was stipulated in the terms of agreement that the belt would not be at stake. McLaughlin, after the defeat, left for home, when he paid a forfeit to John McMahon with whom he had a match pending at San Francisco because McLaughlin found it impossible to go through with the bout.

On February 21, 1877, he beat John Cavanaugh, gaining two falls at the Opera House of Utica. At the same place on March 5, he wrestled Thiebaud Bauer, in a mixed match, collar-and-elbow style, Graeco-Roman and catch-as-catch-can, which resulted in a wrangle. This was McLaughlin's first match at any style outside of his specialty, collar-and-elbow.

On April 1, 1877, at the Whitney's Opera House, Detroit, he defeated Bauer under the same conditions, winning the collar-and-elbow and catch-as-catch-can bouts but losing the Graeco-Roman match. Following that bout, McLaughlin joined the Canadian Southern Railways as a conductor and attended to his railway business until the fall of 1878, when he was defeated by McMahon at Bakersfield, Vt., collar-and-elbow, at McCormick's Hall, Chicago. A few months later, he turned the tables on McMahon at the same place.

On January 18, 1879, he wrestled Graeco-Roman style against Lucien Marc Christol, who had fraudulently represented himself as Andre Christol, and threw him in three minutes with such violence, that he broke the Frenchman's right collar-bone. McLaughlin then defeated William Miller at the Music Hall of Boston, Graeco-Roman, tripping allowed. Following that, he wrestled a draw with John Mc-

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Mahon in Boston, collar-and-elbow, alternate bouts in jacket and harness, each man securing a fall.

At the Academy of Music in Baltimore, March 26, 1879, McLaughlin lost to Miller, Graeco-Roman style, and three weeks later, in the same hall, they engaged in a draw. On August 27 of that same year, McLaughlin defeated Christol at Detroit losing the Graeco-Roman bout but winning the catch-as-catch-can and collar-and-elbow bouts.

His last public appearance was made at Whitney's Opera House, Detroit, September 23, 1879, when he wrestled in mixed fashion. Bauer throwing him only at Graeco-Roman. Having afforded ample opportunity to all wrestlers to compete with him, and having failed in persistent efforts to secure a return match with Owens who beat him for the title, Col. McLaughlin decided to retire to private life after more than twenty years of wrestling activity in which he proved himself the master at the famed collar-and-elbow style of grappling.

For those of our readers who may not know how this style differs from that of catch-as-catch-can and Graeco-Roman, we will elaborate. The square hold or collar-and-elbow style of wrestling was the most popular kind in this country between 1860 and 1875 and none in this country ever equalled in skill, Col. McLaughlin, at this style.

The wrestlers competing were not allowed to wear heavy shoes, only slippers or rubbers, being permitted. When the men faced each other, the left hand of A grasped the right collar of B, and the right hand of A grasped firmly the right arm of B. B in turn, grasped A by the right hand collar with the left hand and his right hand also grasped A by the left arm by the elbow.

The contestants wore knit shirts and short coat or jacket not extending below the hips, with strong collar and sleeve for the grasp of the opponent.

Before the men got into action, they were required to take the position outlined above, with the grasp firmly held, after which the signal to get under way was given.

Neither contestant was allowed to loose or break the hold until a fall was decided. If either did so, the referee decided the bout against the wrestler who lost the hold.

No kicking was allowed.

The fall was decided when one of the contestants was on his back with either two hips and one shoulder or two shoulders and one hip striking the ground at the same time.

No butting or scratching was allowed and no resting was permitted until a fall was gained.

Donald Dinnie, champion of auld Scotland, and the greatest wrestler, Cumberland style, in the history of the mat. He weighed



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but 157 pounds, but was as quick as a flash, slippery as an eel, and determined as a bull terrier.

Contemporary with Dinnie was the great Duncan Ross, one of the marvels of his period. He was a famous champion all-around athlete and was the winner of many *Police Gazette* medals for mixed wrestling. He was born at Scentii, Turkey, on March 16, 1856. He weighed 195 pounds and stood 6 feet 1½ inches. He boasted of a 44½-inch chest with an expansion of five inches. His biceps measured 16 inches, his calf 17, and his thigh 25½ inches, and he was as strong as a bull.

Here is a list of his greatest wrestling matches:

He wrestled a draw with William Miller at Watertown, N. Y., in 1878, mixed match, three falls, the time being 2 hours and 20 minutes. He defeated Captain J. C. Daly at Toronto, Can., in 1879, in a mixed match that lasted three hours and five minutes and that same year he beat F. T. Laboissere at Bradford, Can., in a mixed match, three falls, that lasted only seven minutes.

In 1880, he beat John O'Neill at Nahance, Can., mixed match, three falls, in 13 minutes, and J. S. Jackson at the same place that same year in 9 minutes.

In 1886, he beat H. U. McDonald at Kingston, Can., in a brutal match that lasted five hours. McDonald had to quit when he broke his collar-bone and two ribs and was unable to come to time.

He lost a match to the great H. M. Dufur at Marlboro, Mass., in 2 hours and 30 minutes, and wrestled an hour draw with Edwin Bibby at New York City in 1881, catch-as-catch-can in two falls.

He wrestled with T. F. Lynch, A. S. Brady, Clarence Whistler, Lou Moore, E. R. O'Donnell and Dave Simon, and defeated Captain Daly of New York for the *Police Gazette* championship medal and won. Ross was one of the most feared wrestlers of his time and ranked with Muldoon among the stars of his day.

Edwin Decker was a champion before Muldoon's time. He was born at Highgate, Vt., on December 23, 1859, stood five feet six inches in height, weighed 170 pounds and was a master in his profession. Among his best matches were: On February 10, 1880, defeated Mike Horagon at West Farlee, Vt., in 17 minutes. Beat Dean Monohan one week later in straight falls in 10 minutes. Beat George W. Flagg of Braintree, Vt., at West Farlee, Vt., in 2 hours and 12 minutes. Defeated S. C. Lensor of Haverhill, N. H., at Bradford, Vt., in three straight falls in 32 minutes.

He scored over Frank R. Wheeler, champion of New Hampshire, in 45 minutes and Black Sam in 40 minutes. His greatest bout was with Ed Cox of Fairfield, Vt., at St. Albans, Vt., Music Hall on August 20, 1880, for $250 a side and the championship of America,

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which he won in two straight falls in an hour and 15 minutes. Besides these matches, he gained victories in scores of others.

Captain James C. Daly, the Irish champion, was born in County Cork, Ireland, in 1852. He was a stone cutter by trade and commenced his athletic career at the age of 15. He won prizes at the Irish National Exhibition games throughout the United States and Canada. He was a 6 feet 1½ inches giant, magnificently built, scaled 195 pounds and had a natural chest development of 44 inches.

As an athlete, he threw the 56-pound weight, Irish style, 27 feet 2 inches; the 30-pound shot, 30 feet; and the 16-pound shot, 46 feet 8 inches. In the running high jump he cleared the bar at 5 feet 10 inches, a marvelous record in his time. He cleared 44 feet 8 inches in the hop, skip and jump and had a record of 20 feet ¾ inches in the running broad jump besides being a great wrestler.

At Boston, 1880, with Thomas Lynch, he won the heavyweight championship of the world, defeating E. W. Johnston and Duncan C. Ross.

Among his great victories were included the following:

Prof. W. Miller, one hour and 49 minutes; Heigster, the "Oak of the Rhine," three falls in 27 minutes; De Leon, two falls in 45 minutes; Treher, three falls in 16 minutes; Col. McLaughlin, two falls in 2 hours and 26 minutes; also a score of others of less repute and a victory over Duncan C. Ross at Albany, N. Y., that lasted six hours and 13 minutes and was continued over two days, November 17 and 19, the match being ended when Ross broke his arm. Daly's victories and defeats could fill a small volume, so many matches did he have.

Walter E. Brown of the Boston Police Department, who wrestled James Quigley of the New York force for the police championship, stood 5 feet 9, weighed 190 pounds, had a 42 inches chest, 17 inches biceps, 13 forearm, 35 waist, 25 thigh, 18 calf. He lifted 2,000 pounds at the gymnasium and for a time was the recognized strong man champion of America. Instead of swinging dumbbells, he swung blacksmith's anvils.

He was pronounced by physical training directors as the marvel of the world. In his match with Quigley, the New Yorker won.

George W. Flagg was a famous wrestler of Vermont, where he held the title of that state. He was born at Brainten, Vt., in 1839, stood six feet and scaled 212 pounds. He was very spry and a good athlete. During his early days, he was engaged in farming and lumbering but when he reached the age of fifteen, he turned to wrestling and toured the countryside giving exhibitions.

He wrestled all the famous men of his time and at the outbreak of the Civil War he enlisted with the second Vermont regiment and served until the close of the war. During his time in the army, he

wrestled every man who came his way and earned himself additional coin in that manner. He won the championship of the Army of the Potomac and was extremely popular with the soldiers.

At the close of the war he settled down to private life as a farmer and for the next ten years he never wrestled, but after a decade had elapsed, his friends induced him to return and he did so with great success. He wrestled forty-one times and won every match but one, that to H. M. Dufur. But later he got his revenge by turning the tables on that celebrated wrestler in a return engagement.

James Quigley was a muscular specimen of humanity whose strength gained for him considerable attention. He was 5 feet 9 and weighed 196 pounds. He had 16½ inches biceps, 14 inches forearm, 44 inches chest development and 17 inches in the calf.

On February 22, 1879 he won the national amateur heavyweight championship and then turned pro. He engaged in many thrilling bouts, but his best was that in New York City with Clarence Whistler, Graeco-Roman style, and Quigley was defeated after a long and bitter struggle.

Quigley was then matched to wrestle William E. Brown, the champion of the Boston police. The bout was staged at Irving Hall, New York City, under the management of Richard K. Fox, and Quigley won.

Lucien Marc Christol was a popular athlete of Toledo, Ohio. He gained fame early in his wrestling career as being the first man to have a cannon fired from his shoulder. This trick he performed in every country in the world, for Christol was a great traveller. He was a good weight lifter, his record being a lift of 1,150 pounds. He held the record during his day of raising 135 pounds with each hand. That, for a fellow who scaled only 138 pounds, was an extraordinary feat.

Christol was a great trapeze performer. He joined a French troupe of twenty-six trapeze artists, most of whom were killed or badly hurt, yet he took daredevil chances and though injured several times in falling, he never was badly hurt and soon gained recognition as the world's greatest trapeze performer. He was known as the American Daredevil.

While wrestling with Colonel McLaughlin in Chicago, a match that lasted more than two hours, the Colonel fell on Christol and crushed his collar bone. Christol travelled for a long time with Barnum and did the feat of lifting a man on horseback, holding the man and horse in mid-air. He gave exhibitions of wrestling and strength tests in this country, France, England, Italy, Morocco, Egypt, Germany, Russia, Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Spain, India, Australia, Norway, Finland, Holland and Syria.

Joe Acton, the champion English wrestler, stood only 5 feet 5

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inches. He was the smallest wrestler among the famed matmen of grand-dad's days.

Acton's greatest matches were with his bitterest rival, Edwin Bibby. They engaged in eight contests, and Acton won five of the bouts. It was not until 1881 that Acton decided to come to America, where he was well received.

His record abroad was a good one, and that in this country was equally well. He engaged every man of note.

Charles E. Flynn was a noted wrestler of Illinois, but was born in New Orleans. He was a man of extraordinary strength. He stood 5 feet 9½ inches, weighed 182 pounds and, like his Irish dad, he was a beautiful specimen physically. As an athlete, he gained a big reputation in the Northwest, having earned the wrestling championship of that section in his match with the powerful Scotchman, Morgan.

He made his first pro appearance at the National League baseball grounds of Chicago, when he downed Tom Martin, better known as "The Blower." In his next match, that with Jim Daly, a powerful molder who had never been beaten, he gained the first fall, and then found himself surrounded by a gang of ruffians, who forced him to quit the ring because they were wagering heavily on Daly and, foreseeing defeat, decided to save their money by rushing the ring, cutting the ropes and accusing Flynn of fouling.

Thus Flynn was declared the loser and the gamblers enriched themselves by claiming their "winnings." The referee, incensed at the action of the mob, fled and the following day called Flynn to his hotel and awarded him with the stakes. The affair at the time created quite a sensation, but was not uncommon in both wrestling and boxing matches.

Flynn's most notable contest was at the Central Music Hall of Chicago, where on February 16, 1881, in a tourney for the Northwestern championship, he defeated seven opponents and entered the final round with J. A. Morgan as his opponent.

The conditions of the match were Graeco-Roman style, best two out of three falls, and for four hours they tugged and tussled with each gaining a fall. They were on the verge of collapse when time was called and they agreed to postpone the bout for two weeks. They resumed the bout in Chicago Gymnasium Hall, where, after an hour and thirty-five minutes of wrestling, Flynn won the fall and title.

Nat E. Hutchins, born in Waterbury, Vt., in 1851, was the lightweight collar-and-elbow champion of America. He started his career when a mere boy and won many matches. As a lad he engaged in a struggle with Patrick J. McGun for two hundred dollars that took place at Marlboro, Mass., and was won by him in two hours and twenty-seven minutes. That bout established him as a real wrestler.

Most of his bouts were decided in New England, where he was



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extremely popular. He scaled about 140 pounds in the majority of his matches.

Gus Lambert, christened Esdras Lambert, was a French-Canadian, who was born at St. Guillaume, Canada, in 1850. He scaled 180 pounds and was 5 feet 8. His feats at Graeco-Roman, catch-as-catch-can and collar-and-elbow style wrestling, and in dumbbell lifting, were remarkable. He gained a wide reputation for his skill and was greatly in demand.

He also was a noted boxer. He held a record of lifting a 175-pound dumbbell above his head with a steady push.

At an early age his parents moved to Connecticut, where he remained until 1879, when he went to New York to join the professional wrestlers. He was often seen in Harry Hill's, near the Bowery, where he took on all comers. He also performed at Owney Geoghegan's, where his best bout was with Black Sam, one of the few Negro wrestlers of that period. They wrestled collar-and-elbow and, after an hour and ten minutes, the bout was called a draw when Sam's harness broke.

Then Lambert turned boxer and fought several vicious bouts before returning to his first love, wrestling. On December 28, 1882, he wrestled John McMahon for the collar-and-elbow championship of the world at Volk's Garden in New York City. He threw McMahon in the first bout, but was thrown in the two following, thereby losing the match and also the accompanying side bet of two hundred and fifty dollars.

In 1883 he was tendered a benefit at Harry Hill's and wound up boxing John Hughes, whom he stopped in the third. Twenty-five days later, he won the championship gold medal offered to the best collar-and-elbow wrestler of Connecticut by defeating Sam Cooley of Hartford.

Viro Small, better known as Black Sam of Rutland, Vt., was one of the first of the Negro race to take up wrestling in this country as a professional and he was a very good man in his profession. He specialized in collar-and-elbow bouts.

He was born at Buford, South Carolina, in 1854, was 5 feet 9½ inches and scaled 185 pounds.

He came to New York in 1881 and enlisted under the banner of Owney Geoghegan, for whom he gave exhibitions and acted at times as a bouncer at Owney's Old House. He later went to Vermont, where he won many matches. He was a skillful wrestler and was well versed in the tricks of the sport.

John Cudihee of Denver, Colo., was born of Irish parents near Rochester, N. Y., in July, 1853. He was a weight-lifter of note and a good wrestler at collar-and-elbow style. His wrestling career dates back to 1866, when he was only thirteen years old, at which time he

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was already well thought of in the profession. In 1869 he moved to Jackson County, Mich., where he met and defeated many noted wrestlers. In six years he was never laid on his back.

During the great wrestling boom of 1878 he, like many others, was taken with the fever, and was sent to Carbonate Camp where, after his recovery, he joined the police force. He remained for a year and a half, then resigned and again took up his favorite sport. His greatest match was with Christol, mixed bout. He lost the first fall, Graeco-Roman, but gained the next two at collar-and-elbow.

With that victory, he went to Colorado, where he clashed with Charles Connors in a match that lasted four hours and ten minutes with neither gaining a fall. In a return bout, Connors won and then Cudihee was matched with William Muldoon in a mixed bout for six hundred dollars a side. Cudihee won the first fall in thirty minutes and the third in two hours and forty minutes and a fortune changed hands because of the heavy backing that Muldoon had. Cudihee surprised all hands by the skillful manner in which he beat the New York champion. When Cudihee retired, he went into politics in Colorado.

Charles Murphy was another good matman of the early American period of wrestling. His real name was Charles N. Perkins of Boston, Mass. He was a member of the famous rowing crew of Faulkner and Regan. He came to New York in 1871 and went to live in Brooklyn, where he took the name of Murphy. He was defeated by Colonel McLaughlin and Matt Garce; wrestled a draw with Charles Connot and later beat him in a match for the middleweight championship of America. He was a blacksmith by trade, weighed 170 pounds and stood 5 feet 10 inches.

Lee Burton was the champion wrestler of Michigan. He was born in 1852, stood 5 feet 10½ inches and scaled 170 pounds. He was an expert wrestler and lost only four matches at collar-and-elbow style.

Sam Fox was the Pacific Coast champion. He was born on July 8, 1849, at Richmond, Canada. He stood 6 feet 1 inch in height and weighed 185 pounds. His record was a good one, but he didn't engage in as many matches as did other great grapplers of his day.



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Chapter VI

# Roeber, Champion

FOLLOWING Muldoon, the cream of the American wrestlers prior to the rise of Frank Gotch were Ernest Roeber, Tom Jenkins, Evan Lewis, the Original Strangler; John Piening, Farmer Burns and Fred Beall. There were a number of other good matmen at the same time, but they didn't quite rank with the above.

Ernest Roeber succeeded William Muldoon as Graeco-Roman wrestling champion. How the title came to pass from the latter's possession, how the two came to be associated, and how that association of more than forty years' standing cemented a friendship that nothing but death disrupted, makes probably one of the most revealing chapters in the story of American wrestling.

It was two years before Muldoon had added to his renown by bringing back John L. Sullivan in such magnificent condition for the match with Kilrain that they first met. He was on tour with the combination headed by the then popular variety stars, Fred Hallen and Enid Hart, and on this week in 1887 they were working at Miner's Theatre on the Bowery. But let Roeber tell the story.

The heir to Muldoon's wrestling mantle, an active figure who was referee in most of the important wrestling contests around Greater New York during Muldoon's days as a Boxing Commissioner, narrated the following:

"I was working in a tobacco factory and wrestling a couple of nights a week so as to keep in trim for the defense of my title as amateur mat champion. One evening, on my way home to supper, some fellows from the neighborhood stopped me and told me that I was wrestling that night.

"I thought they meant a trip to some nearby gymnasium—I was always on the lookout for a chance to get a good workout. But when they told me that it was Muldoon they expected me to meet, I didn't like the idea. I was very proud of my strength, but Muldoon had been the champion for a half dozen years, and when I thought of his reputation and the pictures I had seen of him, to tell the truth I was scared at the thought of getting fresh with a man like that.

"But I was living in a part of the city known as the Gas House district, and a tough place it was if the gang had it in for you. I am not stretching things when I say that I stood a good chance of being dropped off a dock with a stone around my neck if I said 'no.'

"The gang were waiting for me on my doorstep before I had finished with my supper. So around to Miner's we go, and after a while Fred Hallen comes out on the stage and announces that $25 was



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offered to any one who could stay fifteen minutes with Champion Muldoon.

"Up sprang one of the gang and accepted the challenge for me—I didn't have anything to say in the matter. When Hallen explained that an opponent had already been selected and that we would have to come around the next night, a scrap almost started right then and there. But finally the leader of the Gas House gang said we would be on hand the next night, and if I didn't get the chance at Muldoon he promised trouble and plenty of it.

"So the next night I was on hand with the gang, and before I knew it, I was out on the stage with Muldoon. Ach! What a licking he gave me.

"I got slammed all over the place and banged into the scenery and anything else that was in the way on the stage, but I stuck. Muldoon almost had me blue in the face, but when the fifteen minutes were up he had failed to pin my shoulders to the mat.

"When I came home that night and my wife got a look at me, she took my wrestling tights and threw them in the stove. She said there would be no more wrestling for me. And I didn't get the twenty-five for quite a while.

"Several months went by before I next saw Muldoon. I had given up my job to take charge of a saloon owned by a brother on Fulton, corner of Poplar Street, Brooklyn. Muldoon surprised me by walking in one morning as I was behind the bar. He told me he had his own show now and asked me if I wanted to come down to Hyde & Behman's Theatre that night and wrestle. I said: 'Who and how much?' He promised me $25 if Hughie Leonard failed to put me down in fifteen minutes.

"I went on that night and Leonard failed to throw me. Then Muldoon wanted to know if I would go against Sebastian Miller the following night under the same conditions. I showed up the next night and while I waited to go on, Miller, whom I knew quite well, started to tell me a hard luck story. He explained how I was working and that if he failed to throw me he would probably lose his job. I asked him if he meant that I was to let him throw me, and when he said 'Yes,' I said: 'Sebastian, you'll have to get a new job.'

"Miller looked so downhearted I finally told him that I wouldn't throw him, but that he had better do everything he could to throw me. He did, but I won by staying the fifteen minutes. After it was over Muldoon came over and asked if I was ready to wrestle the next night. I asked him who he had for me this time.

" 'You go on with me to-morrow night,' he said.

" 'That's what I've been waiting for,' I shouted in a way that made him look at me kinder surprised. 'You're the fellow I want to get.'



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"So the next night we went to it for the second time. What a match!

"He finally got me in a little more than 13 minutes, but he taught me a lot of wrestling before he won. When we were through he brought me into his dressing room and wanted to know what I meant by saying he was the fellow I wanted to get. I told him that I never got the twenty-five for staying the 15 minutes the first time at Miner's and that I could get awful mad for $25.

" 'I had nothing to do with that,' he said, pulling a roll of bills from his pocket. 'Here is the twenty-five for the Leonard match. Here is the twenty-five for the Miller bout. Here is another twenty-five for the hard battle you gave me this evening. And here is the twenty-five you should have been paid for our first match. How would you like to travel with my show?'

"Well, it happened on just that day that my brother had come back and taken his saloon away from me. I was out of a job and Muldoon's offer of $25 a week and expenses looked mighty good to me right then. So off I was with the champion on the road.

"For the first few months I thought Muldoon was a very hard man to get close to. And he is, until he gets to know you well. Some people think he is all hardness and sternness, but when you have a chance to know him well, then you find his heart is very big and soft underneath.

"The first experience I had of how nice he can be, came when we returned to New York. He surprised me after the night performance by telling me he would like me to bring my boy to the theatre before the matinee performance on the next day. My boy was still in kilts when I brought him around and Muldoon asked me to leave the little fellow with him in his dressing room while I attended to some business in connection with the show.

"When I came back I was told that Muldoon and my little son had gone out for a walk. Soon they came back and there was the kid strutting proudly with the champion and he was dressed in a brand new suit and his first pair of breeches.

" 'No more dresses for me, daddy,' he hollered out.

"That was the real beginning of our friendship. We've had many strange experiences in the more than forty years we have known each other. Two of them stick out above the rest. One happened in Washington, the other in Baltimore. It was in Baltimore that Muldoon and myself were the means of giving Joe Gans, one of the greatest little men of the ring that ever lived, his first chance to box before a crowd.

"By this time I was looking after nearly everything that had to do with our athletic performance, and as we needed a couple of more bouts to fill out the show, the boss sent me out to get a couple of

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Negro boys to box each other. One of the boys I put on was Gans. He went three rounds with another colored boy, and when he got through I handed him 50 cents and told him he was the worst boxer I had ever seen. Joe apologized and said:

" 'I'se sorry, boss, but won't you please ask Mr. Muldoon to give me another chance and I'll do much better the next time.'

"To tell the truth, Muldoon had already instructed me to be sure and have Gans on hand for the next performance. But, you see, if I had told Joe he was good he would have expected a whole dollar. We tipped Al Herford off to come around the next day and look the boy over. Gans knocked out his opponent as prettily as you could ask and Herford took him in hand and made him a champion.

"About the visit to Washington—it was there something happened that gave me the surprise of my life. I was called on to go on with the champion this night. This was nothing unusual, as, unless we managed to get some pretty good man to take up the challenge, Muldoon and I could give the crowd a better match than to have him go on with some poor dub.

"Any match between us two now was sure to be a good hot fifteen minutes of work. I don't think we ever had a more exciting match than the one we had that night. When the time was up, Muldoon went back to his corner and put on his bathrobe and then walked down to the centre of the stage and held up his hand for silence.

"I only wish I could remember, word for word, the speech Muldoon made that night. But he told all the people out there in the theatre that night that he would no longer defend his title of Graeco-Roman champion. He told them he was passing the title on to another, and one whom he knew he could trust to defend it with honesty and sportsmanship and that he knew of no better man to pass it over to.

" 'The new champion,' he said, 'is Ernest Roeber.' There were some who questioned Muldoon's right to pass his crown to me, but I stood ready at all times to meet all comers and as I later proved, I was the best of the crop and entitled to the honors Muldoon had bestowed upon me."





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Chapter VII

# Story of Frank Gotch

WE now enter the greatest period of modern wrestling history —that which was dominated by Frank Gotch and George Hackenschmidt. The story of Frank Gotch is a most interesting one. He was born on a farm near Humboldt, Iowa, on April 27, 1878, just about the time that William Muldoon was making a name for himself as the world's premier matman. Gotch was a rugged lad who was fond of outdoor life. His first athletic connection was as a baseball player and at the age of seventeen he was the captain of his town team. During the games, when the umpire decided a technical point against the home team, the spectators usually rose in a body and demanded the life of the umpire and it took a man of nerve to protect the arbiter.

Frank Gotch proved himself the man. It took only a few minutes for him to quiet the mob and at the same time to leave a dozen of the more strenuous to nurse sore arms and legs. In one of the mad scrambles, Gotch's middle finger of his left hand was ripped from the socket and he retired from baseball.

He readily took to the mat game and soon established quite a reputation about town as a wrestler of no mean ability. His normal strength was equal to that of any man. A wrestling carnival hit town one day with an athletic feature of the "Greatest Aggregation." Gotch not only stuck the limit with their wrestling champion, but knocked out the boxer traveling with the show. That gave Gotch country-wide publicity and the news quickly sifted through the state of Iowa.

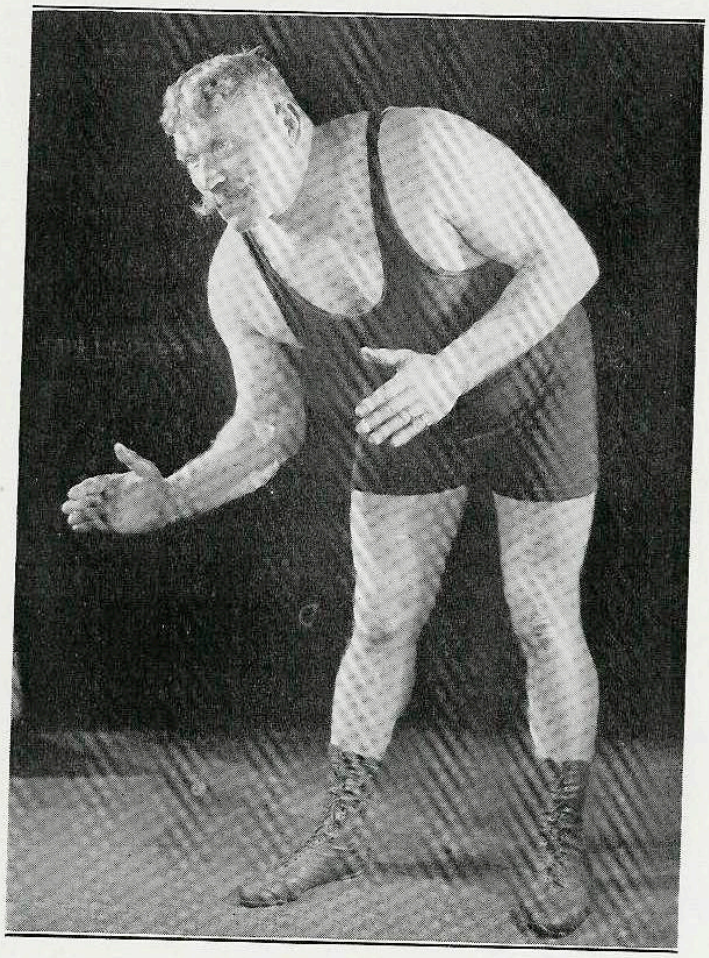
Foxy old Farmer Burns heard of it, learned that the Dodge County farmers would back their man to the limit and quietly laid plans to clean up. He was too well known to try it himself, so he imported Dan McLeod, at that time an excellent wrestler. Needless to add that Burns imported McLeod under an assumed name and set the stage for a killing.

The unwary Gotch and his Humboldt friends little dreamed how good McLeod was rated when they accepted the match. The men wrestled it out on a Sunday. No hall in Humboldt could have held the crowd so the men stripped and wrestled on the bare ground in the ball park.

McLeod's handlers saw to it that plenty of cinders from a nearby round house covered the improvised mat, figuring that Gotch would be underneath on his back most of the time and that he would quit cold when his back was rubbed sufficiently hard into the cinders.

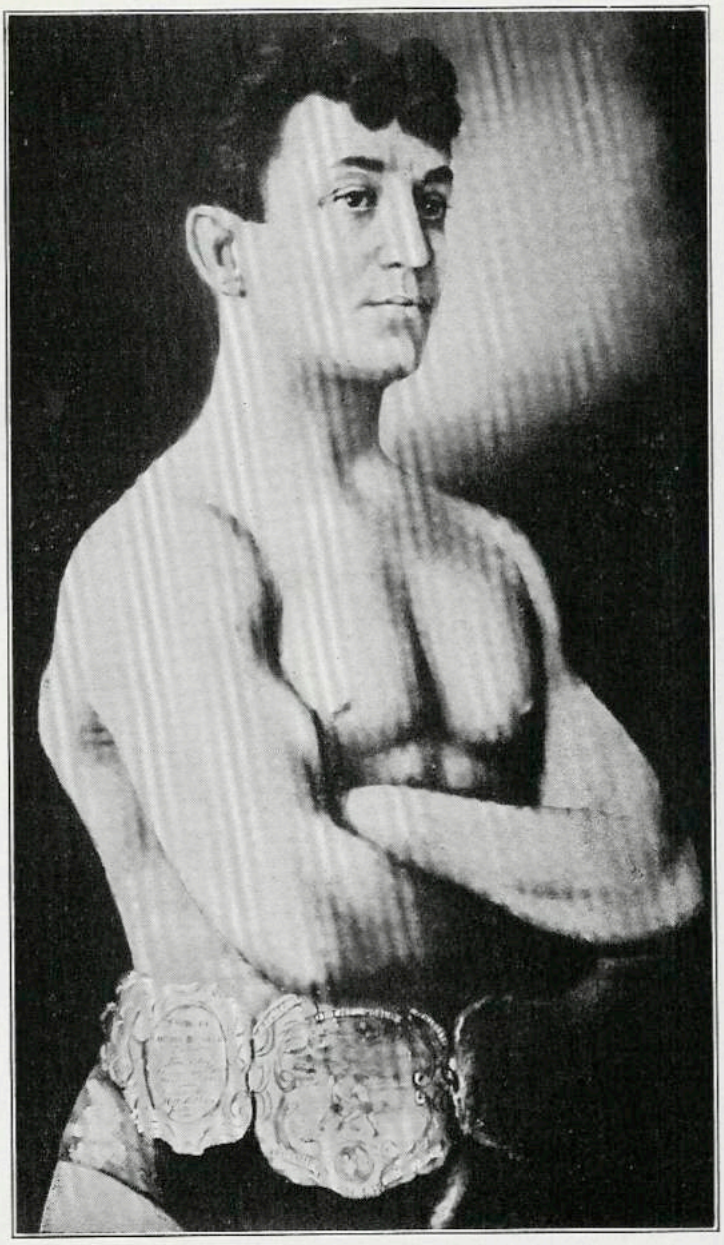


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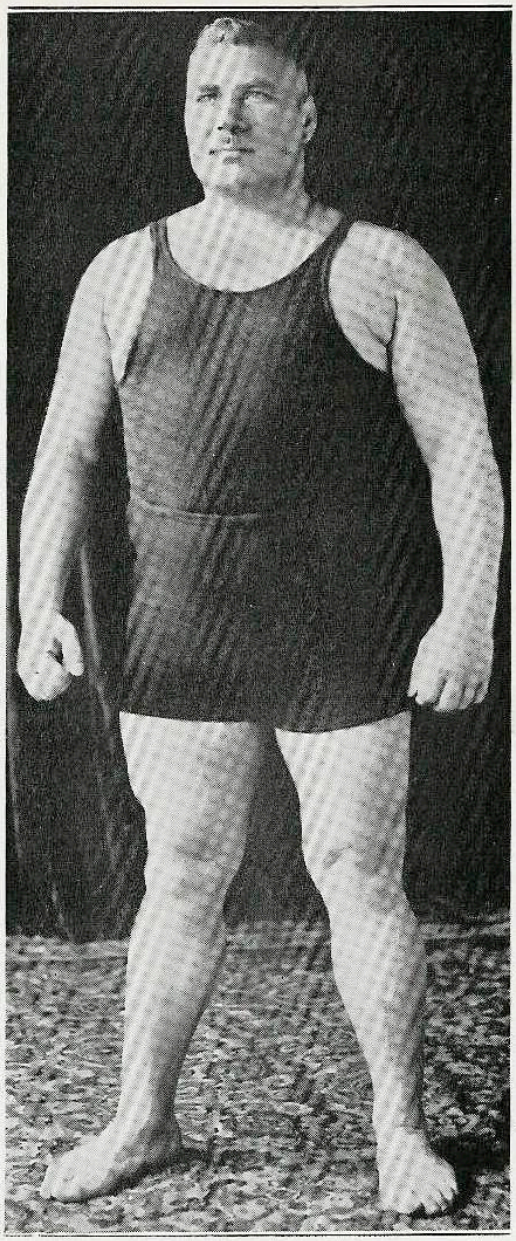
Ivan Poddubny, famous Russian wrestler who was tossed by Stecher in the Scissors King's first defense of his title in 1926.


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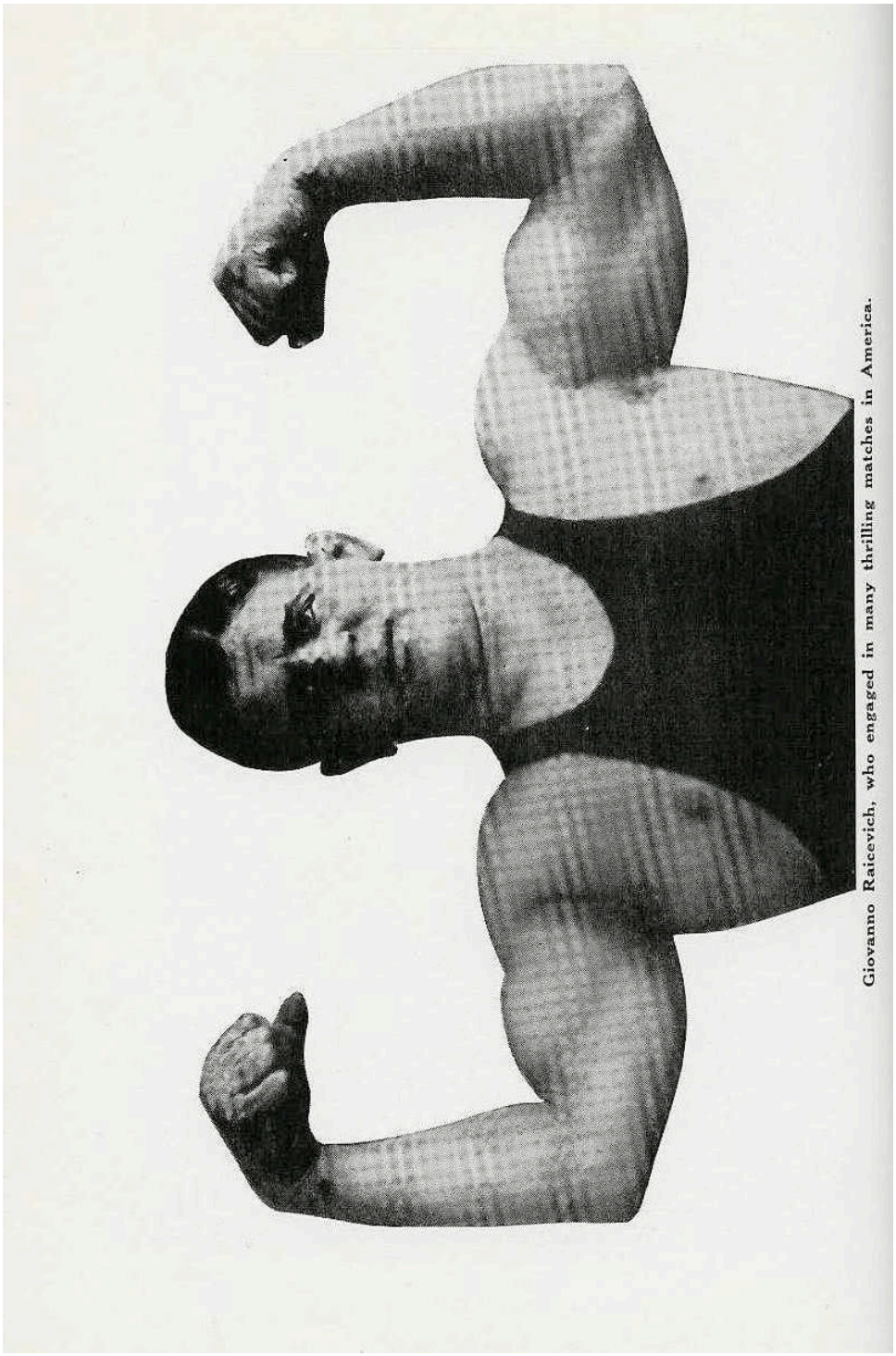
George Bothner, world lightweight champion, who, although at most, weighed only 142 pounds, wrestled and tossed some of the greatest heavyweights in U. S. wrestling history.

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Alex Garkawienko, who was brought to America by Stanislaus Zbyszko and was a top notch wrestler.


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Giovanno Raicevich, who engaged in many thrilling matches in America.

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Briefly the match was a tough one and lasted until darkness. It took all of McLeod's cleverness to stall off the rushing tactics of Gotch, who soon resembled a huge hamburger steak. McLeod finally pinned the youngster's shoulders to the mat, but was himself all in when the referee tapped him on the shoulder. The contest was really looked upon as a Gotch victory.

The wily "Farmer" was Gotch's next opponent. They met at Fort Dodge, Iowa, in December, 1899. Farmer Burns was on a country-wide tour offering $25 to any man that would stay on the mat with him for fifteen minutes. He was at the height of his career and although a witness to the McLeod-Gotch affair, figured that he could easily take the youngster over the jumps. That he was almost jolted out of his guarantee goes without saying.

The "Farmer" was, and still is for that matter, a past master in scientific wrestling, but he had to call upon all his tricks-in-trade to down Gotch before the limit. The time was 11 minutes. Burns addressed the crowd from the footlights after the match:

"If Gotch will travel with me I will make him champion of America." Burns later made good on that promise.

Gotch progressed rapidly under the teachings of the "Farmer," and easily disposed of Ruby, Galliton, Scheller, Moth, Duncan, McMillan, former title holder; and Wassem. In the spring of 1901, Dick Butler, a millionaire of Alaska, came to Iowa to persuade Burns to take a trip to the Yukon and clean up the camps. Butler asserted that a fortune was to be made up there for a wrestler who could deliver the goods. Burns was unwilling to leave his family, but recommended Gotch as the man to clean up. So under the name of Frank Kennedy, Gotch started with Butler for the Yukon. He was back in Iowa less than six months later without a defeat chalked up against his record and with over $35,000 in gold.

The first stop of Gotch in Alaska was at a mining camp. He was introduced by Butler to a few friends as a placer miner who was seeking his fortune in the gold fields. The camp in particular had a bully. He was in the habit of "showing off" about the camp on Saturday nights, and one evening had a run in with "Kennedy."

In less time than it takes to tell it, the bully was howling for mercy as he lay flat on his back enmeshed in a full Nelson. The story of "Kennedy's" victory over the "bad man" quickly circulated about the camps and in due course of time a challenge was hurled at "Kennedy" by Billy Murdock, champion wrestler of the district.

The bout was held in a saloon, and the camps for miles around turned out to a man to witness the downfall of the stranger. The tilt lasted exactly four minutes. Gotch rushed out at the word "Go" and roughed Murdock about the room, cuffing him about the ears and head and tripping him at every opportunity. Seeing an opening,



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Gotch made a flying tackle at Murdock's legs and both crashed to the sawdust floor, with Gotch on top.

With a wrench and a pull, Gotch slapped on a full Nelson and Murdock rolled over on his back. "Kennedy's" fame spread like wildfire, and within two weeks he had been challenged and had thrown two wrestlers named Riley and Murphy, both for purses of $2,500, after a few minutes work.

The miners began to think that for a plain placer miner "Kennedy" was a remarkable wrestler, but Gotch let them talk and quietly went about his work of searching for gold. Down at Dawson they boasted of a crack wrestler by the name of White.

The weekly papers insisted upon a meeting between the two, and within a week of his last match "Kennedy" posted $2,500 to cover White's forfeit. Vast sums were wagered on the ultimate outcome, but "Kennedy" did not keep his supporters long in suspense, as he threw White three times in less than eighteen minutes.

The champion wrestler of Alaska was Silas Archer. "Kennedy" was out to clean up and issued a bold defi to Archer for a match to a finish, with the championship of the Klondike at stake. They both bet $10,000 as a side issue, and the miners turned out in force, traveling miles through the snow to witness the championship tilt.

Again lump sums of gold were wagered on the outcome, and again the backers of "Kennedy" were rewarded for their loyalty when he threw Archer with a double wrist lock, after eighteen minutes gruelling work. Gotch cleaned up $18,00 on that match alone.

Little did Frank Gotch dream, when he accepted the offer of Farmer Burns to go to Alaska, that he would clean up thousands of dollars and come back to the States the most talked of man in wrestling!

At the time of Gotch's visit there was present in Alaska a famed fistic warrior, Frank Slavin, known as the Sydney Cornstalk, a fine heavyweight fighter who had gone to Alaska for the gold rush. Gotch had heard considerable about the prowess of Slavin but thought he could whip him. Frank didn't think much of Slavin's physical make up and word to that effect having reached Slavin, he promptly challenged the wrestler to a fight. Gotch was quick to accept for he figured that he was as good with the mitts as he was on the mat and the match was arranged.

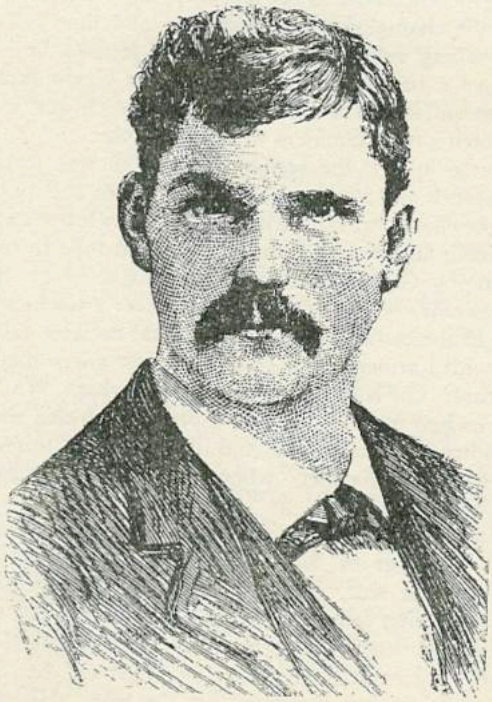
The match took place at the New Savoy Theatre, Dawson City, September 25, 1901, winner take all. Gotch was magnificently proportioned and looked the fighter, but Slavin proved too much for him. At the end of the fourth round Gotch was bleeding badly from the mouth and nose and one eye was battered to a closed slit. The other was slowly closing.

At the bell for the fifth round, Gotch became so enraged over his

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inability to connect solidly with a punch that he rushed Slavin to the ropes, and picking him bodily up heaved him over the ropes into the tenth row of spectators.

Slavin was badly shaken by the fall, but crawled through the ropes and was ready to continue hostilities, but the referee quickly awarded the match to him, and Gotch left the ring a battered but a wiser man. "He is the best wrestler I ever boxed with," grinned Slavin after the match.



**Clarence Whistler, whose greatest matches were staged with William Muldoon. He was Muldoon's most formidable opponent.**



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Chapter VIII

# Gotch Wins U. S. Title

IN 1902 and 1903 Farmer Burns carefully nursed Gotch along and a match was arranged with Tom Jenkins, then champion of America. The bout took place at Cleveland, Ohio, February 22, 1903. Jenkins was at that time the strongest wrestler and one of the most scientific. The "Farmer" had carefully instructed Gotch as to the correct method to wrestle the titleholder and although Gotch carried the instructions out to the letter, he was badly defeated.

The big fellows roughed it about the mat for over one hour and a half before going to the canvas. Referee Edwards threatened to throw them both out of the ring if they did not show some aggressiveness and Jenkins was the first to realize that his title was in danger. He rushed Gotch to the ropes but the Iowan slid to the floor. Jenkins worked his way behind and started to work over Gotch like a beaver. By main strength Gotch rose to his feet carrying Jenkins up with him.

He tripped the champion as he rushed in and then fell on top of him, slowly working away at a half nelson. Jenkins broke the grip and then slipped a hammerlock on Frank that Gotch broke after a struggle. Tom shifted to a bar nelson and crotch and in 1 minute 55 seconds, Gotch's two shoulders touched the mat.

When he came up for the second fall, Gotch was wabbly on his feet and his mouth and nose were bleeding from the quick stabs to the face that the champion used when trying to lock the strangle hold. Jenkins was fresh and rushed Gotch about from rope to rope, roughing it and banging Gotch down to the canvas at every opportunity. After twelve minutes work, Jenkins slipped over a jawlock and Gotch was slammed to the canvas for the second and decisive fall.

His match with Farmer Burns followed a few minor matches which he won with ease. The bout took place at Bellingham, Wash., October 5, 1903. Burns had never lost a match previous to this encounter.

"I tipped Gotch off to my tricks and then gave him thirty pounds in that match," said the "Farmer" when discussing that match. "How was that for liberality?"

It was Frank's ambition to defeat the veteran decisively. He "bullied" his way out of his corner at the bell and rushed the "Farmer" about the mat, jabbing out with his left for the head. Burns was too cunning to be caught with a head lock, but tripped over Gotch's oustretched foot and flopped to the canvas, with Gotch on top.

He worked hard over Burns, but the "Farmer" had a block for every attempt and at last squirmed off the mat. He slipped from beneath when the men had assumed the same position in ring centre



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and for the first time in the match he was behind. He clamped on a full nelson, but Gotch broke the dangerous hold by brute strength, flinging Burns to one side of the ring. He was after the veteran like a flash and as the "Farmer" turned to face him Frank slipped in with a full nelson.

As Burns tripped and his heels kicked in the air, Gotch bore down upon him with his full weight and slipped to a crotch and wrist lock. Burns was game and bridged, but the weight of Gotch leaning upon him was too much after a struggle and he slowly fell back. The time was 22 minutes, 30 seconds.

In the second bout, Burns took the offensive at the start. Gotch was winded from his earlier exertions and took matters easy, breaking all of the "Farmer's" most dangerous holds by mere strength and allowing the veteran to work over him. Gotch regained his wind while lying on his face and soon took the upper hand, working his way above and holding Burns on the mat for ten minutes.

Burns tried desperately to rise and at last broke away, but Gotch came up with him and grabbing him by the waist, turned him upside down and crashed his head on the canvas. They both mixed it up fiercely and Burns leaped in with a head lock that he clamped on for three minutes.

Gotch was groggy when he broke the hold and Burns was quick to sense victory. He clamped on a double bar lock with which he pinned Frank's shoulders to the mat in the exact time that he himself had gone down in the first match—22 minutes, 30 seconds.

Gotch recuperated quickly during the ten-minute rest between bouts and came out for the third and last with a rush. Burns gave him the foot as he plunged in to meet him and Gotch crashed almost off the mat. He grabbed the upper rope to save himself from falling over into the ringsiders and rushed Burns about the ring when he again came on.

Frank threw the "Farmer" and then clamped on his deadly toe hold that Burns broke with ease. Gotch secured a half nelson but Burns slipped out and countered with an armlock that put Gotch over on one shoulder. Gotch reached down and grasped the "Farmer's" toe in a lock and Burns had to release his armlock in order to avoid going to the canvas. Gotch worked his way up to a half nelson and Burns was slowly forced to the mat, both shoulders touching in exactly 16 minutes and 10 seconds.

That victory of Gotch's was really a remarkable achievement as Burns had defeated the best in the land up to that point, and the stock of the Iowan rose mightily. Talk was again rife of a return match with Jenkins for the title.

They were matched to meet at Bellingham, Wash., the following January. Gotch in the meanwhile went into intensive training and



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defeated Chief Two Feathers and the "Farmer" again in a return match.

Frank Gotch became champion of America on January 27, 1904, after one of the fiercest and roughest battles in all the annals of the mat game. Jenkins had defeated all comers for six years, mostly working them to exhaustion by his rough-house wrestling. His strength was marvelous and, in combination with his knowledge of the game, he was well nigh invincible in the heavyweight class.

He had badly defeated Gotch in their previous meeting. But Frank was out for revenge and he went through a course of training that put him through the ropes the evening of the bout in the best possible condition for a gruelling match. Seats sold for $25. Jenkins was guaranteed $1,000—win, lose or draw, while Gotch worked for a small percentage of the house. It was the biggest match up to that time ever staged on the Coast.

Gotch, although twenty pounds lighter than Jenkins, was the aggressor throughout. For twenty minutes the men wrestled head to head without going to the mat. Jenkins was roughing it at every opportunity, rubbing his elbows and fists across Frank's face and gouging at the eyes.

Gotch retaliated in kind and both were dripping blood after a few minutes work. Jenkins tripped Gotch after twenty minutes and one second and was behind for a few minutes, but Frank wriggled out of a dangerous wristlock and jumped to his feet. As Jenkins arose Gotch rushed him about the ring, cuffing and rubbing his doubled fists into the Clevelander's midsection.

Jenkins crashed down with Gotch behind and Frank worried him off the mat. Three times in the next ten minutes Jenkins worked his way off the mat and held onto the rope when Gotch slipped over a dangerous hold. Tom Davis, the referee, was too careful about calling falls, and he was roundly hissed repeatedly by the spectators when it looked as though Gotch had his opponent's both shoulders on the mat.

Gotch finally worked his way into a half nelson and crotch and slammed Jenkins down hard four times in succession before putting on full pressure. When Gotch turned him loose, after the referee had slapped him on the back, Jenkins was unable to get on his feet and had to be carried to his corner.

During the ten minutes rest Jenkins was rubbed down and his handlers sent him out for the second fall in fair shape. He started after Gotch like a wild man, rushing the Iowan about the mat and rough-housing. In a fierce mixup he seemingly fastened his deadly head scissors on Gotch, but Frank jerked his way clear by brute strength.

Feeling his strength going, Jenkins deliberately fouled Gotch with

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a strangle hold. Frank broke the hold without much effort and slammed Jenkins to the mat, pouncing down upon him with all his weight. He lifted Jenkins high up in the air and again slammed him down with terrific force. Both men were out for blood with Gotch holding the upper hand.

Jenkins slipped into a strangle hold for a second time, but Frank bunched the muscles on his neck and threw Jenkins away. He roughed him from rope to rope and Jenkins leaped in with another strangle hold.

The spectators were in a frenzy over the foul holds that Jenkins was applying to Gotch, but the referee afterward stated that it was plain that Jenkins resorted to that method in an attempt to save himself from certain defeat as he saw that it was only a question of time for Gotch was smashing through his defense with comparative ease and throwing off the strangle holds with a smile.

Gotch kept his head throughout all this wild mixup, but roughed Jenkins at every opportunity and the Clevelander's eyes and mouth were battered to a pulp. Blood dripped from his nose and he was breathing with difficulty. Gotch was marked up about the face but was smiling through it all and kidding his man.

Jenkins became desperate when he realized that his roughing tactics were of no use and using every ounce of his strength swung a terrific blow at Gotch's head with his closed fist. The punch landed with a thud but Gotch merely shook his head and started to work in close to his man. At this point Referee Davis stepped in and escorted Jenkins to his corner at the same time announcing that he awarded the second and decisive fall to Gotch on a foul.

The scene that followed beggars description. Followers of the Iowan rushed the ring and seizing Gotch by the shoulders lifted him high in the air as they marched about the ring and carried him to his dressing room.

Jenkins was not disheartened by the outcome and immediately challenged Gotch to a return match for his lost title, which was just as quickly snapped up by the new champion. Jenkins demanded that the bout be held in Cleveland and that a Cleveland man referee. At first Gotch balked at the arrangements, but feeling that he had the Clevelander's number he readily consented.

The match took place February 1, 1905, Jenkins scaled 215 pounds stripped and was in wonderful condition. Gotch was still about twenty pounds lighter. He had spent the intervening time in conditioning himself with some hard matches, throwing Dan McLeod twice in Vancouver and defeating Yankee Rodgers, Jim Parr, Tim Harrington, Aoyagi, Chris Pearson and Emil Maupaus.

As in their previous matches both big fellows were cautious at the beginning, standing head to head pulling and tugging. After 12


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minutes, 1 second, Jenkins, with a sudden wrench, threw Gotch to the floor, and in an instant was behind the champion, working for a waist lock. Gotch was in a sitting position, but pushed himself clear and jumped to his feet. Jenkins was after him in a wild rage and slammed him up against the ropes, feinting for a head opening.

Gotch countered effectively and held off his challenger for a few minutes, but Jenkins ducked under the outstretched arms and came up in close, hooking both arms about the waist and lifting Gotch over his head. He crushed the Iowan to the canvas and then jumped on top, but Frank worked his way loose and jumped to his feet amid wild yells from the spectators.

Gotch tripped Jenkins as the two stood head to head, but Tom was on his feet before Frank could work his way behind. Jenkins jumped in with a head lock and bore Gotch to the mat, working his arm down into a strangle hold. Frank tugged and squirmed in vain and after 28 minutes of sensational wrestling he slowly caved in.

The fast pace had its effects upon Jenkins when he came out for the second fall and he worked fast to throw the champion before his strength had entirely left him. Gotch was equal to the occasion and roughed it just as hard as did Jenkins. Gotch grapped a crotch hold as the two whirled about, and shifting to a double wrist lock, suddenly threw all his weight on Jenkins and the veteran was forced back with both shoulders touching the mat. It took exactly 48 seconds for the fall.

Jenkins was almost exhausted by the gruelling he had been subjected to and was groggy when he answered the bell for the third fall. He leaped in with a strangle hold that the referee broke after cautioning him. Gotch made a headlong dive for Jenkins' legs and secured a riveted hold on his left ankle. Jenkins crashed over and Gotch worried him about the mat, with the Clevelander making futile attempts to break the crushing hold. Gotch worked his way up and crunched in a headlock that he held for two minutes.

Jenkins was in for an awful gruelling and he knew it, but was powerless to resist. Frank worked back to a toe hold, squeezed for a minute with Jenkins twisting about in pain and then clamped on a headlock again. He held this hold for two minutes and then shifted his attack to the legs. Jenkins fought back gamely but was thrown over with a double body scissors. The time was 11 minutes.

Jenkins almost fainted from exhaustion and had to be carried to his corner and first aid given. Gotch was smiling as he received the plaudits of the vast assemblage. He jumped lightly over the ropes and seemed as fresh as when he enterd the ring.

The critics saw in Gotch a wrestler who combined the strength of the old school mat stars and the skill of the modern. They said that the new Iowa "Wonder Man" was as agile as a cat in his manoeuvers

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and that he had the grappling sport down to such science that he had assumed a rank all by himself.

But the British critics didn't hail Gotch with the same enthusiasm as did their American brethren. They had a fine wrestler in Jim Parr, a strong fellow who had downed every good man in England, and in Parr they saw the man who could put Frank Gotch in his place. Gotch at the time was the American titleholder and Parr was the British king of the heavyweights, and Parr, backed by British money, came here and demanded a match with Gotch for the world crown. The American champion quickly accepted and a bout was arranged in Buffalo for June 27, 1904, to a finish, best two out of three falls, catch-as-catch-can.

It was at the Olympic Club that the men faced each other and the affair drew a tremendous gathering. The American public made Gotch a 3-to-1 favorite, and the result proved they were not wrong. Parr was a powerful fellow whose favorite hold was the headlock that made the original Strangler Lewis so famous, and on this hold he depended to carry off the victory.

Gotch, on the other hand was famed for his variety of holds, primarily a crushing body hold, and he banked on these to turn the trick in his favor. Gotch outweighed Parr, 188 to 175 pounds, and in general build looked like a perfect athlete. The Englishman had only a broad chest with which to show off.

Parr was off his stool with a rush at the opening clang of the gong, but Gotch met him in mid-ring with an effective block that almost upset the Englishman. If an opponent roughed things with Gotch he was met with rougher methods, and if he played the game clean he was met with just as even a break, but the Englishman chose to make a "rough house" out of it and Gotch was in there to see to it that it should be a "rough house."

Parr bullied, stamped and shoved his way about the mat but was met with shoves and slaps that were just as rough. Finally after five minutes of pulling and tugging with both men head to head, Parr made a dive underneath and came up with Gotch's right leg gripped fast in his two hands. Gotch danced around on his left leg, balancing himself, and with a sudden turn and wrench, broke loose, while the crowd yelled its approval.

It was a wonderful exhibition of strength, and Parr stepped back for a breathing spell. Gotch followed up and Parr made another headlong dive for his underpinning, but this time Gotch sidestepped and, as the Englishman plunged past, he brought both hands around the waist, hurtling Parr to the canvas with a thud.

Gotch clamped on a nelson and leg hold and squeezed hard for two minutes before letting Parr wriggle loose. They both regained their feet the same instant and Parr suddenly made a feint for the



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legs again, only to jump high in the air and clamp on the headlock. He held on like grim death while the American lashed about the mat, and Gotch was a little bit groggy when he finally squirmed loose.

Parr secured a leg hold, which Gotch broke by kicking both legs vigorously. The Englishman came up with Gotch and fastened on his headlock again, but this time he wrapped his arms a trifle high and Gotch, bending low, heaved him clear over his head, Parr landing in a heap on the other side of the ring. Gotch was quick to see his advantage and rushed the length of the mat, throwing himself down and pinning Parr with a wrist lock and nelson.

Parr managed to get one hand loose, but Gotch grabbed one of his flying legs and hooked it over his own, at the same time applying pressure on the big toe. Parr was in danger, but he gamely stood the pain for a couple of minutes. Gotch, still holding tight to the foot with his right hand, fastened a half nelson with his left and both of Parr's shoulders touched the mat in exactly 49 minutes, 10 seconds.

The house was a bedlam of noise when the referee slapped the American champion on the back. The men both retired for a brief rest of fifteen minutes and it was noticed that the Englishman limped slightly when he crawled through the ropes for the second fall. Gotch came on with a big grin and waved both his hands at his ringside friends.

Parr was out to win in a hurry when the gong rang for the second fall, and rushed Gotch almost out of the ring. The top rope saved the champion a bad fall. Gotch yanked Parr's head forward and the Englishman fell to both knees but scampered across the mat on all fours with Gotch after him.

He flopped on top almost at the edge of the mat. Gotch tried for a toe hold, but Parr kicked his arms away and regained his feet. He threw the Iowan to the canvas by sheer strength when the men regained their feet, but could not hold him down. Gotch was on both knees and hands when Parr tried a double-reverse-nelson which Gotch squirmed out of with ease, grinning up at Parr at the same time.

They were both on their feet in an instant, but Gotch tripped Parr and slammed him to the mat, at the same time clamping on an arm hold. Parr came to a bridge, but Gotch jumped over and locked both legs across the waist, putting on the pressure in a body scissors. Parr sank slowly down and lost the second fall and match after twenty-seven minutes of very fast work.

Gotch's rise was rapid. His triumph over Parr was hailed by Gotch's friends and he was referred to by sports critics as the marvel of the age. The champion's next match was with Dan McLeod, whom he had met five years previously and was most anxious to face again in an effort to avenge his previous defeat.

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It was at Vancouver on August 6, 1904, that they clashed in a catch-as-catch-can style match, two out of three falls, and the contest drew a tremendous amount of interest. Thousands of fans jammed their way into the arena at Brockton Point, most of them coal miners from the near-by mines. McLeod at the time was a wrestler of unusual merit, as he had beaten both Farmer Burns and Jenkins and at one time was recognized as the American titleholder, hence he had plenty of backing. In fact, the miners went down—hook, line and sinker—on his chances, so much faith did they place in his ability to take Gotch into camp for the second time.

In order to prepare himself for Gotch, McLeod entered a preliminary tournament and in that he disposed of the best talent. He was in prime condition and received rounds of applause when he entered the ring. Gotch also was in fine trim and he likewise received a generous welcome. They were well matched in strength and agility. Each was strong as an ox and they weighed within one pound of each other. Gotch had a margin of three inches on his rival, was younger and had a slight edge in general physical condition.

McLeod was the first to lead. He pushed Gotch over to the ropes and tried for a leg hold, but the champion kicked his way free.

McLeod feinted for the head, and as the champion lifted his guard, he, quicker than a flash, dove for the legs and spun Gotch around in the air, crashing the titleholder to the canvas with a thump and falling on him at the same time, trying for a nelson. Gotch straightened out on the mat and lay face downward, while McLeod switched his attack to the feet, trying for a toe hold.

Gotch kicked his hands away, but Dan was not to be denied and clamped on a double wrist and waist lock that took Gotch three minutes to break. He jumped to his feet and as McLeod came up with him he rushed his man to the edge of the mat, trying for a head lock. McLeod was too fast for him and fell to the canvas, yanking Gotch down with him.

Frank worked his way behind and clamped on a full nelson, but McLeod brought the crowd to its feet by a remarkable headspin and crawled away to the ropes. When the men had been brought back to the ring center, Gotch threw McLeod with a wrist lock and again tried for a nelson, but McLeod crawled out of danger again.

Dan reached down and grabbed Gotch's right foot, lifting it on high and bringing the champion to the canvas with a crash. They both struggled over the mat, first one and then the other trying for toe holds. Gotch was in distress for a few seconds, but by brute strength wriggled clear and rose to his feet.

Up and down again the pair squirmed and wrestled, with neither having the advantage, when suddenly Gotch worked his way behind McLeod and, grasping him about the waist, lifted him high in the air



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and sent him spinning through the air to land on both shoulders on the mat about ten feet distant. Gotch made a headlong dive after his man, but McLeod was too quick and was up on his knees when Gotch came in.

Dan tried for a head lock, but Gotch ducked low, grasping for the legs as a counter. McLeod danced out of danger but came in instantly with a leg hold. Gotch danced around on one foot, but McLeod only reached down lower until both hands were about Gotch's ankles.

Gotch was upset and practically standing on his head, with McLeod pushing down with all his weight in an effort to make the champion bend his neck. The champion's strength was marvelous, and McLeod, after working at the hold for a few minutes, had to give up.

He threw Gotch over to the mat and jumped on him, trying to pin the champion's shoulders in a full-nelson. He changed to a half-nelson and crotch hold and Gotch was in a dangerous position. McLeod started to put pressure behind his nelson, and every time Gotch tried to turn he was brought back by the crotch.

The champion bridged and held his position for a few minutes, but the effort was too much and, with the referee lying on his face beside him, both shoulders gently touched the mat at exactly 32:44. The crowd went wild when McLeod was patted on the back by the referee and told that he had won the first fall.

The matside odds shifted during the ten minutes rest and when the two crawled through the ropes again for the second fall, Gotch was an even money favorite, whereas he had been quoted as 2-to-1 before the match.

The champion started in like a mad man at the call of time for the second fall. He roughed McLeod over the mat, trying for a head lock.

Dan was tired from his previous exertions and began to play for time. He countered the champion's lightning jabs effectively, but skipped out of danger a little too late and Grotch had him down with a leg hold. The champion switched to a hammer and then a body scissors, but McLeod worked his way out of both dangerous holds.

Gotch put on steam and forced the milling, but McLeod was equal to the task and roughed matters with him. Dan threw Gotch with a leg hold, but could not keep him down long enough to fasten on a good hold. Gotch worked his way behind and snapped in an arm lock.

McLeod struggled with might and main to release his arms, but the effort was useless and only tended to weaken him. He finally bridged, but Gotch threw his full weight upon him, forcing both shoulders to the mat. Time, 23 minutes, 20 seconds.

The last terrific struggle sapped all of McLeod's strength and he came out for the third fall groggy and shaking on his legs. He was

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game, however, and met the champion at his own game, roughing the wrestling at every opportunity and resisting every effort of Gotch's until the pace grew too hot.

After struggling in a crotch and half nelson for almost five minutes, McLeod at last fell back practically exhausted at 26 minutes, 38 seconds, and the referee proclaimed Gotch the winner. Once more he had successfully defended his hard-won title.

The men met again October 5, 1904, only a few months after, but McLeod had shot his bolt in the previous match and proved merely a plaything in the hands of the champion, who took the first two falls in easy fashion.

It was soon after McLeod's defeat, Mahmout Yussif, a native of Pashi Bali, Bulgaria, came to this country under the direction of George Harrington of England and Anton Pierre, and hurled challenges at both Gotch and Jenkins, but both repeatedly sidestepped the new arrival from the Ottoman Empire.

After Frank Gotch had taken the measure of Dan McLeod, it was generally acknowledged that the Iowa farmer boy was not only the best American drawing card but one of the best wrestlers seen in America since the days of William Muldoon. He received many challenges, but there was only one man whom he cared to meet, a tough wrestler of the rough-and-tumble type, Yankee Rogers. Yankee, at the time, was making a reputation for himself as the "bad man" of the mat because of his aggressiveness, and he was downing the best grapplers in America. He therefore was selected as the most logical contender and he agreed to tackle Gotch in a two-out-of-three-falls match on November 25, 1904.

Gotch, through systematic training and the matches in which he had engaged, had worked his frame into a beautiful physical specimen. He was as hard as rocks and had acquired muscle that made him a perfect figure for a sculptor. He stripped at 200 pounds with not an ounce of fat to show. Rogers was about the same height as Gotch, but stripped twelve pounds more than the champion. They were primed to the minute for the contest, which was extensively advertised and brought the fans from miles around the Crescent City.

It was agreed that the first fall be in catch-as-catch-can style and the second, Graeco-Roman. If a third fall was necessary, the men were to toss for the privilege of deciding. The bout got under way and the fun began.

Rogers was tough and roughed the champion at the outset. He jabbed his two doubled fists into the washboarded stomach of Gotch but was met with a grin. Gotch was more than his equal in strength, and his science of the ancient sport was far superior. For half an hour the giants bullied each other about the mat. Rogers several



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times was in danger from a body scissors and again from a headlock, but he always wriggled out of dangerous positions.

Rogers started to rough-house in earnest and repeatedly rammed his elbow into the champion's face until temper finally got the better of Gotch and he bent Rogers' elbow back and gripped him in a reverse-nelson. Rogers crashed to the mat and Gotch heaved his 200 pounds on his opponent's chest, crashing both of Rogers' shoulders to the mat in 43:10.

During the excitement, the mat had ripped and the sawdust flooded the ring so that when Rogers crawled through the ropes to go to his dressing room for his fifteen minutes' rest he was covered with it. Two men set to work to mend the damaged mat during the recess and when the two came on again for the second fall at the Graeco-Roman style it was as good as new.

The different style was entirely foreign to the champion and he was flopped to the floor after two minutes' standing work. Rogers worked his way behind and for the first time during the evening Gotch was in difficulty. Rogers jabbed Gotch in the face with his knuckles and blood began to drip from the champion's mouth and nose.

By brute strength Gotch rose to his feet, carrying Rogers with him, and the two sparred for holds. Rogers forgot that he was in a wrestling match and jabbed his left to the champion's sore face. Rogers won the second fall and they resumed work.

Gotch got on to the hang of things and retaliated in kind, slapping Rogers with his open hands about the neck and ears. Gotch rushed his man to the ropes and bent his back almost over them.

The referee had to jump in and warn Gotch for his rough tactics. Gotch was infuriated over the unfair methods employed and never let up for an instant, punishing Rogers from one side of the mat to the other. Three times he rushed Rogers to the ropes and three times the referee had to pull him away.

Finally Gotch had his man in a neutral corner and with a shove and a heave lifted Rogers up bodily and flung him over the top rope into the fourth row of spectators. Rogers landed on his neck and had to be helped back through the ropes.

Gotch stood grinning at his opponent in ring center. Rogers called for his seconds to put in his stool and also for a physician. His seconds were busy applying ice to his head and fanning him.

The house doctor called for a stretcher and, as the attendants came rushing up the aisle with it, the spectators jeered and hooted. Gotch tried to make a speech from the ringside but his words could not be heard a foot, as the house was busy cheering the champion.

Rogers was laid on the stretcher and carried to his dressing room, where several doctors worked over him. Finally the official verdict

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was pronounced as a fractured rib, and the fall and match were awarded the champion.

As already related, Gotch defeated Tom Jenkins for the American heavyweight championship at Cleveland, Ohio, February 1, 1905. "The Rolling-Mill Man" was still confident, however, and repeatedly hurled challenges at Gotch until, at last, the titleholder agreed to meet the former champion in a best two-falls-out-of-three match at Madison Square Garden, March 15, 1905. Bitter enmity had sprung up between the two and the entire purse was agreed upon to go to the winner.

Gotch had been constantly on the road, working with a theatrical troupe, and between the one-night stands and the poor traveling accommodations, the champion contracted a severe cold that laid him up in bed for a ten-day stretch. He had vanquished Ed Atherton at Elmira, New York, on February 6, and then made a quick jump into New York City, where he defeated Jim Parr.

His next leap was to Washington, D. C., where he threw Joe Grant before President Theodore Roosevelt and a score of distinguished United States Senators and many prominent followers of the mat game. He defeated Charles Wittmer at Cincinnati, Ohio, the following week end, although hardly able to talk, scurried back to Utica, New York, for a match with Jim Parr, who was easy in two straight falls.

This was on March 10 and the Jenkins match was only five days away. Gotch immediately went to bed and only arose on the afternoon of the important contest. He was in no condition to tackle a man of Jenkins' calibre, but he had signed the agreement papers and was determined to go through with it, although strongly advised against it by his physician.

The bout was in Graeco-Roman style and, although Gotch managed to take one fall, he quickly tired and Jenkins threw him for the remaining two falls and the championship. Frank was in an exhausted condition at the call of time and had to be carried to his hotel.

George Hackenschmidt, the "Russian Lion," was at that time on his way from Australia to the United States. Jenkins issued a formal challenge to the foreigner as soon as he landed at San Francisco. In the meantime, Charles Cochrane of London, at that time manager of Hackenschmidt, arrived in New York to meet Hackenschmidt after his long absence from home and recross the Atlantic with his champion, for, be it known, Hackenschmidt did not come to America in quest of matches or engagements. However, upon Cochrane's arrival in the metropolis he was persuaded by Harry Pollok, manager of Tom Jenkins, to accept terms for a match with Jenkins, to be held at Madison Square Garden, for the heavyweight championship of the world.



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In due time, Hack arrived in New York and with his manager, who had joined him at Chicago en route from the coast to New York, pleaded with Pollok to postpone the match and to first give him time to visit England. Pollok, who had Cochrane's signature to an iron-clad agreement, refused, and Hackenschmidt was forced into a match much against his wishes, and in turn vowed that he would get even with "the whole blooming outfit."

How Hackenschmidt got "even with the whole blooming outfit" was enacted before a crowded house on the evening of May 4, 1905, at Madison Square Garden, New York City, in his match with the American champion, Tom Jenkins. The bout was to have been two falls out of three, but Hack rose in his might and slammed the American to the canvas for two quick falls, the first in 31 minutes, 15 seconds, and the last in 22 minutes, 4 seconds.

Jenkins never had a chance. He proved but a plaything in the hands of the mighty Russian. Hackenschmidt was extremely upset when he crawled between the ropes and, although the vast crowd greeted him with an uproar of cheers, it failed to bring a smile to his lips. He was magnificent when he threw off his bathrobe. He stood 5 feet, 10 inches and weighed 208 pounds. Jenkins weighed eight pounds less, but was an inch taller.

At the sound of the gong, Hack was off his stool like a flash, kicking the inoffensive chair through the ropes in his mad dash to get at the American. Jenkins met him halfway with a body check, but was flung up against the ropes with the force of the impact.

George leaped at Jenkins and brought both hands up to the back of the neck. Jenkins jumped up and down as if trying the Russian's strength and then wrenched himself clear. Hack was after him in a lionlike leap, but Jenkins tincanned about the ring. The Russian stopped him short and reached up for the neck, but Jenkins struck both hands away and then sprang behind. The foreigner whirled as though on a pivot and met him with a clinch about the neck.

Try as he might, Jenkins failed to loosen the hands but Hack ended matters by hurling the American the length of the ring, Jenkins coming up with a jerk on the ropes. Four times in all Hackenschmidt grabbed Jenkins and flung him from him, each time the ropes saving the American from a bad fall.

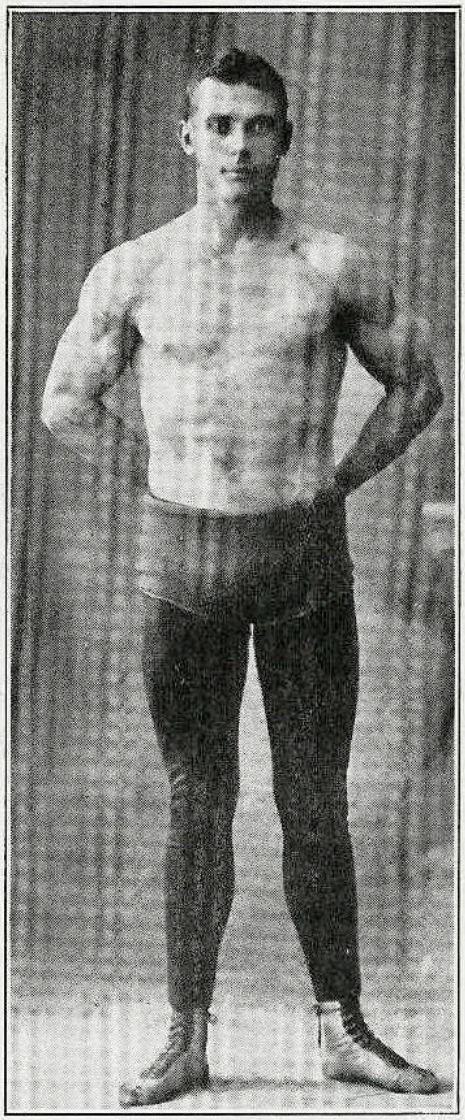
As the men maneuvered about for a hold, Jenkins suddenly dove in for the legs. He fastened his dangerous hold, the thigh grip, but Hack shook himself like a dog after a swim and Jenkins was splashed off like a spray. The instantaneous and easy way that the Russian disposed of one of the deadly grips of the catch-as-catch-can champion made the crowd gasp. Jenkins looked worried, but gamely took the offensive. Hackenschmidt leaped in with his neck hold and the two wrestled head to head, straining for a fall.

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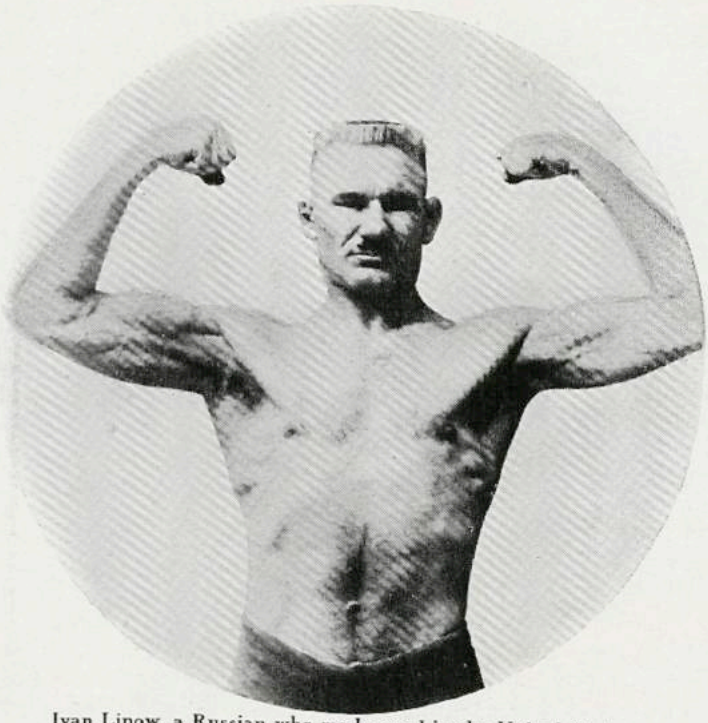
Tommy Draack, a tough wrestler of the old school.


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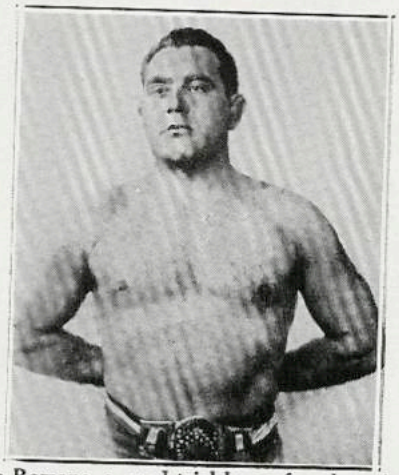


**Emil Klank, manager of Frank Gotch when he beat Hackenschmidt.**

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Ivan Linow, a Russian who made good in the United States.



Mike Romano, a good trial horse for champions.



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Alex Aberg, the powerful Graeco-Roman champion whom Zbyszko defeated.

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The American was the first to give way. Suddenly he slipped behind and locked both arms about Hack's stomach, at the same time lifting him in the air. The Russian seemed to contract all his muscles, then sprang free. Jenkins looked at him open-mouthed!

That wasn't wrestling, it was more like a lion jumping through a paper hoop! Once more Jenkins darted behind, but Hack almost swept the American off his feet with a free sweep of his left hand.

As quick as a flash, Hackenschmidt gave Tom the foot and the American crashed to the mat, Hack immediately jumping behind and starting to work furiously over him. He locked on a half-nelson and then began to heave and push with all his strength and weight.

Jenkins managed to get to all-fours and then assumed a sitting position, with Hack still behind. The crowd went crazy when the American wrenched himself clear and jumped to his feet. The sole of Jenkin's left shoe became loose after ten minutes of fast standing work and he stopped the bout until he could rip off the shoe, continuing with his foot bare.

He managed to work behind and threw Hackenschmidt at the twenty-five minute mark, but could not hold the Russian, who leaped to his feet with a snarl. The constant battering was weakening Jenkins and he began to gasp for breath. Hack feinted for the legs and then came in with a half-nelson, both hands up under the chest and clasped about the back of the neck.

Inch by inch, he twisted the American over and then flopped him to the canvas, pinning both shoulders to the mat. Referee Hurst failed to see the fall and signalled Hackenschmidt to go on. A minute later Hackenschmidt had both shoulders squarely resting upon the pad and this time Hurst slapped him on the back.

Jenkins got to his feet and walked on shaky legs to his corner, where he sank into his chair. Hack went sprightly over to his corner, popped into his bathrobe and then lightly vaulted over the rope (four feet high) and ran upstairs, two at a time, to his dressing room. Jenkins followed more slowly two minutes later. At the end of fifteen minutes both men appeared, Jenkins much refreshed from a cold shower and brisk rub-down.

Jenkins assumed the offensive for the first few minutes, holding the Russian even and trying trick after trick in an effort to bring his man to the canvas. Hack broke the grips with ease and then suddenly placed both hands under Jenkins' arms and whirled him about in the air, then slammed him to the canvas. Hack immediately worked his way behind and, although Jenkins wriggled out of some dangerous holds, he quickly weakened under the mauling, and at the end of 22 minutes he fell back under a half-nelson.

After Hackenschmidt had won the highest honors in the wrestling game from the American champion, Tom Jenkins, he rushed to Eng-



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land, turning a deaf ear to the challenges hurled at him by Gotch. Jenkins, in the meanwhile, was busy in action, defeating his nearest contenders with ease, and another match with Gotch was made to take place at Madison Square Garden on May 19. It developed into one of the most savage mat encounters in the annals of the sport. Gotch was still a trifle weak from his severe cold, while Jenkins was in excellent condition.

The outcome of the match was a surprise to the followers of the Iowan. Speak to any resident of Humbolt today and he will tell you that the "favorite son" was jobbed out of the decision by Referee Tim Hurst, the old-time baseball umpire, who was noted for his eccentricities. It was a grudge match and again the winner took all the receipts.

At the opening clang of the gong, Jenkins rushed out feinting for the head, but he was brought up short by a bodylock and thrown down with a thud, with Gotch on top. Gotch held Jenkins down for thirty-five minutes, roughing him about the canvas before the champion at last broke loose, but not before smashing Gotch in the mouth with his right fist.

Gotch protested, but Hurst merely laughed and told him to "go to it." Jenkins locked on a headlock that slipped down into the barred "strangle" hold and, although Gotch loudly protested, the referee again laughed at him. Gotch broke loose after a struggle, but Jenkins wrapped his arms about his head again and they both fell to the canvas, with Tom working hard for a fall on top.

Gotch wriggled away and caught Jenkins by the foot and started to squeeze the big toe with his right hand, at the same time slipping over a double thigh and crotch hold. Tom's head slowly sank to the canvas and his shoulders both touched the mat, but he grabbed the lower ropes and held himself clear by a fraction of an inch. Hurst ordered the men to the center of the mat, where Jenkins started to bully his way, and rough the former titleholder.

Gotch tried to retaliate with the same brand of rough-house and assumed the offensive. Whenever in danger, Jenkins would reach out and grab the ropes. He figured that, as long as Hurst did not know his business, he would use every trick in the trade to keep clear of the mat.

Finally Jenkins jumped in with a headlock that was half a strangle hold and Gotch slowly sank to the canvas for the first fall in 1:30:00.

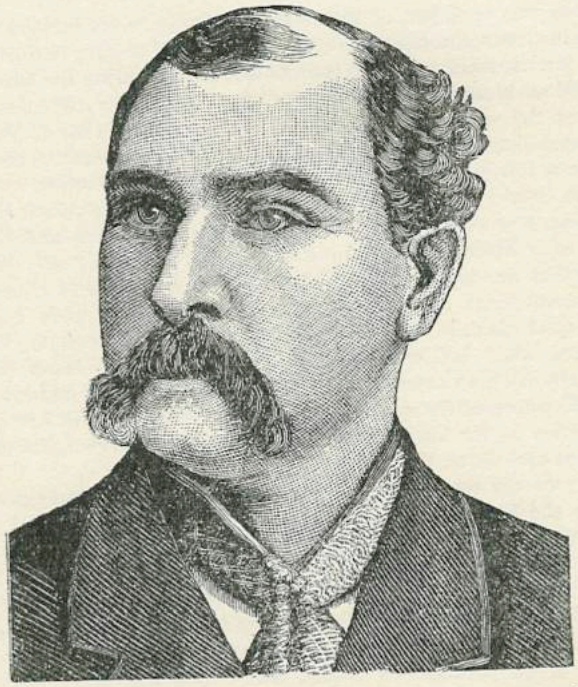
Gotch was badly winded and bleeding badly from the mouth and nose when he answered the call for the second fall. Jenkins was very rough and had Gotch in distress from his head strangle locks.

In a wild mixup, both fell through the ropes, with Jenkins on the top, and Gotch was barely able to walk when he was helped through the ropes. He managed to stall through for a few minutes, and then

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in a perfect rage hurled Jenkins to the mat and, wrapping both his legs about the body, forced the champion's shoulders to the mat.

Gotch was weakened from his own exertions when the men came out for the third fall, while Jenkins was full of pep and action. He rushed Gotch to the ropes and hurled him to the mat. Gotch staggered to his feet and, looking wild-eyed about, lurched forward and fell on his face full length out on the canvas. It was almost half an hour before he regained consciousness and could be carried to his room.



Col. John H. McLaughlin, who ranked among the big shots in the mat sport before and after the Civil War.



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Chapter IX

# Gotch Regains Crown

THE defeat of Gotch by Jenkins, although discouraging, made the Iowan all the more eager to prove that he was the outstanding American heavyweight wrestler. He and his friends were angered at what they termed was unfair treatment at the hands of Referee Hurst, who, they declared, permitted Jenkins to use tactics that should have brought about his disqualification, yet, when one considers the rough-house wrestling which is on view daily at the clubs throughout the country nowadays, that which Jenkins was accused of is tame in comparison. But we must not get away from the fact that when Gotch was striving for international honors, there was real science in wrestling, hence Gotch was well within his rights in protesting as he did.

Gotch was confident of his ability and so were his backers and to prove his championship calibre, it was arranged to have him enter the great international wrestling tournament staged during the latter part of 1905 at Montreal, Quebec and Ottawa, in which mat stars from all over the world were among the competitors. That tournament was much like the one staged by Jack Curley at the Manhattan Opera House a few years later and drew international attention.

In it, Gotch, the U. S. idol, came through with flying colors. He was determined to regain the American title from Jenkins and then to clash with Hackenschmidt in a world's titular affair and he was aware that the only way he could force the issue was to triumph in the international competition. He easily defeated Jack Carceck, Fillmore, Ardahl, Emil Klank, who later became his manager, Yankee Rodgers, Dan McLeod, Emil Maupas and other lesser known wrestlers. By his victories, the Iowan proved his mettle and his name traveled wherever the sport was followed. In America he had gained recognition as the kingpin wrestler among the heavyweights and he began to cash in on the fame that was his.

Fifty of the world's best mat men were in that competition and despite the fine performances of many of the entrants, and bouts that were severely contested, the all-around ability of Gotch stood forth. He was the leading figure. Although the Canadians had a special set of rules—the French-Graeco-Roman style that barred the strangle hold, hammerlock and all holds below the belt—the general style used was the Graeco-Roman—was adopted.

One of the peculiarities of that competition was that under these Canadian rules, the judges at intervals blew a whistle to give the



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wrestlers a rest and whenever a French or a Canadian grappler appeared to tire, or showed evidence of being winded, the shrill blast of the whistle was heard. However, when a foreigner or an American looked like the victim of a Canadian or a French entrant, the officials forgot the whistle.

Emil Maupas was perhaps the best foreigner entered. He was a Frenchman, weighed a little less than Gotch, but bulked big in stature. He was drawn against Frank Gotch toward the end of the tourney and faced the American at Montreal, December 27, 1905, only to meet defeat after a gruelling hour-and-a-half of fast mat work.

Gotch was chain-lightning the night of the match. He had worked his way in condition and rushed Maupas about the mat when time was called. He pinned the Frenchman to the floor and Maupas extricated himself with great difficulty. Gotch almost roughed him through the ropes and saved the Frenchman from toppling over into the crowd by grabbing his legs as he slid through the strands.

Gotch refused to let the foreigner "set" and reached down for a leg hold that crashed Maupas to the canvas. Frank worked his way into a half-nelson and a waist lock and Maupas was slowly bending back with two shoulders almost on the mat when—the whistle blew. Gotch let loose with a grunt, although he had to laugh at the referee as he sat in his corner.

Maupas was almost all in and needed expert attention to send him out in condition. Gotch was in an ugly mood when he answered the call of time again and shoved and bullied Maupas from rope to rope, flinging the Frenchman down with a thump every time he arose. Maupas rushed in with his head down, and a flying tackle about the legs sent Gotch crashing down, while the house jumped to its feet and let out a roar for the Frenchman.

Gotch was up in an instant and upset Maupas with his feet, at the same time clamping on a waist lock. A double-nelson and arm lock were quickly clamped on and Maupas began to heave about trying to unlock himself. Gotch started to put on the pressure and Maupas was slowly sinking down when again the whistle blew.

Gotch was furious over the unfair tactics, and once, when he himself was in danger, with Maupas behind in full control, he turned about and asked what had become of "that wristling guy." It was noticeable that as long as Gotch was in danger the whistle failed to toot. Finally Gotch slammed Maupas to the canvas, and before the referee had time to get his whistle to his mouth both of the Frenchman's shoulders were slammed to the mat for a fall in 1 hour and 1 minute, with a half-nelson and reverse body hold.

The referee was red in the face from blowing the whistle during the second fall match, but Gotch was working fast and soon had Maupas bordering on a state of exhaustion. It took the American


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only twenty-two minutes to pin Maupas to the floor, thus winning the Graeco-Roman wrestling championship of Canada.

During the tournament Gotch was drawn against a terrible Turk by the name of Karakanoff, whose press agent had proclaimed him as the "fiercest thing ever to come from Turkey." He looked the part and had defeated all his opponents with ease. The ball park at Montreal was packed when the two finally met, as a rumor was afloat that the Turk was out for revenge and would strangle Gotch before the referee could interfere.

But the Turk quit; quit cold. He lived up to his sobriquet of "Terrible." Gotch came out with his right hand extended and a smile playing about his lips, the "Terrible One" roared and slapped the hand away. Gotch stepped lightly around the massive figure, and then with a quick wrench sent him flying up against the ropes.

On the rebound, Gotch gave him the foot and in an instant was on top. He reached down and bent the Turk's leg back almost to breaking point, then let him go. He hammerlocked him within an inch of a break and again let him go. Then he rubbed his doubled-up fists across the Turk's stomach and into his kidneys and then almost lifted the top of his head off with a head lock for a few minutes, and again let go. Finally Gotch wrapped both legs around in a body scissors, held on for a minute, squeezing tight and then rolled the Turk free only to jump in with a full-nelson. The American then lifted the Turk high above his head and crashed him to the canvas with a thud, at the same time jumping on top of him with his knees and elbows.

The "Terrible One" gave one scream of fright and then gently rolled over on his back. Gotch jumped to his feet with a laugh, while the thoroughly cowed Turk tried to sneak out of the ring unnoticed. If ever a wrestler was acclaimed with the "Ancient Order of the Tin Can," it was Karakanoff as he stumbled up the aisle toward his dressing room.

Another "rough" wrestler who tackled Gotch during the tournament was a giant Italian named Pietro. It was a boast of Pietro that he had never lost a match at Graeco-Roman style and he loudly proclaimed to the newspapers, a few days previous to the meeting, just what he would do to the mighty American when he met Gotch within the ropes.

Pietro was known as one of the fiercest men in Montreal and in the preliminaries against the smaller fry of matmen he showed no mercy. He almost killed a small Frenchman with a full-nelson only a week previous to his meeting Gotch.

Gotch came through the ropes thoroughly prepared. He let Pietro come to him and as the Italian plunged past he almost yanked the moustache from Pietro's upper lip.

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Pietro glared at Gotch and started to debate with the referee over the foul, but was told to get to work and stop complaining. There was no fall in the first ten minutes' interval, although Pietro was mighty near a decisive fall toward the end of the session when Gotch had him doubled up in a body scissors.

The going became too rough for Pietro in the second bout and he deliberately quit and started to crawl through the ropes. Gotch yanked him back and the two started to slug one another about the mat. Pietro ran behind the referee and started to show him where Gotch had bruised his lip with his elbow.

Gotch slid behind Pietro in the midst of his wailings and slammed him to the mat with a fearful crash. Pietro clambered to his feet and again started through the rope. Gotch again pulled him back and lifted him high above his head. He held Pietro in that position for a few seconds and then heaved him over the ropes. The Italian landed on his back and the fall seemed to instill new life into him for he flew back into the ring and started to exchange punches with the American. The house meanwhile was in a riot.

The referee started to interfere, but was met by a flying fist and he landed outside the ropes. Pietro landed a fearful right haymaker flush on Gotch's jaw, but the American merely grunted and, rushing in close, drove both his fists into Pietro's stomach. At this point Chief of Police Lamouche jumped into the ring with a squad of men and the fighting space was quickly cleared. Gotch was afterwards awarded the match on a foul by the referee.

With those victims' heads dangling from his belt, Gotch once more was acclaimed the supreme wrestler. But he fully realized that he couldn't boast of such honors unless he could regain his lost American crown from Jenkins and he set about to accomplish that. He came into his own again during the next few months. From the time that he had lost the title to Jenkins, he had brushed up on the intricate holds, in addition to which he grew bigger and put on considerable power behind his shoulders and to make more certain that he would triumph in a return bout, he specialized on a toe hold that was unbeatable when applied properly. And added to that, he had become the master of a body scissors and a head lock and when he started his 1906 campaign, he had them all working to perfection.

The goal of his ambition was now within his grasp and he made up his mind that he would reach it. In rapid succession, Farmer Burns, Charles Hackenschmidt, brother of the mighty European star; John Voss, Apollo, Kaiser, Albright, Parr and Yankee Rodgers fell before Gotch in easy fashion. Finally at Asheville, North Carolina, the Iowa Farmer was matched to meet Charles Olson in a finish match. Olson had swept all before him and had a record of sixty-



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eight consecutive victories when he crawled through the ropes to meet Gotch on the evening of March 22.

Olson stripped in good shape, but weighed twenty pounds less than Gotch and stood almost three inches taller. He looked frail when he stood up to shake hands with the former champion. One of the biggest crowds that ever packed into the Grand Opera House gave both men a hearty cheer when they were introduced.

The match proved one of the fastest in the annals of the ancient sport. Olson was exceptionally fast on his feet and easily evaded the bull-like rushes of Gotch when time was called. His previous winning tactics had been to stand his man on his head and whirl him about until he had him dizzy, then to crash him to the canvas and jump in with an arm and body lock.

But it was no easy matter to upset Gotch, much less to stand him on his head. Olson tried his favorite stunt after the two had wrestled head to head for ten minutes, but Gotch's underpinning stayed "put," and instead Olson was sent crashing to the mat. Gotch quickly worked his way behind and applied his toe hold. Olson endured the pain for a couple of minutes and then signalled to the referee that he would allow a fall.

The second fall came even faster, as Gotch was a whirlwind, and followed Olson until he flopped him to the canvas. It took only a few seconds to lock the foot and start squeezing the big toe. Olson sagged over on his back and the referee slapped Gotch on the shoulder.

Finally Gotch was rewarded for his excellent work by being matched with Champion Jenkins to wrestle for the American title at Kansas City, Mo., May 23, 1906. Frank was in splendid condition and extremely confident that he would regain his lost laurels when he stood up to shake hands with "Rough Tom."

Jenkins had worked himself into shape by a series of hard matches and started in to rough-house Gotch when the bell sent them on their way. Their work was very rough and the house was kept in an uproar cheering Jenkins on. Finally after twenty-six minutes, Jenkins secured an arm lock and body scissors and slowly pushed Frank's shoulders over to the canvas.

After fifteen minutes' rest the two went at it again and Gotch appeared the fresher. He met Jenkins more than half way and both were bleeding from the mouth and nose after the ten-minute mark had passed. Gotch continually rushed and once seizing Jenkins about the waist, heaved him over the top rope into the ringsiders.

Jenkins came back full of fight and the two came together in a head-end collision that could be heard all over the house. Jenkins took to butting and had to be warned by the referee for his foul tactics. Gotch suddenly slipped to the floor and Jenkins leaped on

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top, but was met with an effective block. He was in a bad position and Gotch quickly clamped on the dreaded toe hold.

Both of Jenkins' shoulders touched at 14:00. He limped to his dressing room amid applause that was deafening.

Gotch attacked furiously when the men came out for the third fall. Jenkins still showed the effects of the last toe hold and limped about the ring with Gotch following him to prevent Jenkins from getting set. He gave the champion the foot and then started to work over the injured leg.

Jenkins wriggled out of a couple of dangerous toe holds, but his leg was bothering him badly and Gotch continued to peck at the injured limb. Finally at 17:00 Gotch feinted for the foot and quicker than a flash turned Jenkins over with an arm bar and headlock.

An idea of what the papers thought of Gotch, may be gleaned from the following account in the New York *Herald*, after the Iowan had re-won the title:

"Gotch's work on the mat this closing season has been frequently commented upon in the sporting press as the most remarkable ever undertaken by any athlete who ever aspired to prominence in this branch of professional sport.

"Whistler, Acton, Lewis, McLeod, Burns—none of the great men of these or other times, have approached the record of the Iowan, who, from the moment of his start in Buffalo last November, did not stop going until he capped the climax with the defeat of Jenkins in Kansas City last night. North, South, East and West, Canada and America, covering thousands of miles of territory and wrestling on an average of over three matches a week, this great natural athlete encountered the best men that could be secured by the sport's promoters and failed to have a single defeat recorded against him.

"From the time of his downfall at the hands of this same Jenkins in Madison Square Garden just a year ago until yesterday, when he turned the tables on the same man, Gotch's course has been one of unbroken victory.

"It has taken more than physical ability to accomplish such a record. Moral courage of high quality has been needed, as anyone familiar with the mat game appreciates.

"When defeated a year ago in New York City Gotch swallowed a bitter pill.

" 'This is awful,' said he, 'I can scarcely look my Western friends in the face. But it has not shaken my determination to win. I will never take the mat except with the hope and desire for victory, and when the time comes that I have to lose to continue wrestling I shall take off my tights forever.'

"And Gotch has lived up to that slogan. A glance at the Iowa boy's Jenkins matches will indicate the sincerity of his movements



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and will also substantiate the statement that experts have almost invariably picked him as the real American champion, whether in defeat or victory. When Gotch wrestled Jenkins in Bellingham, Wash., in 1904, he was a favorite and he won.

"At Cleveland in 1905 he was a very pronounced favorite and he won. When he first men Jenkins in New York City the same year he was a prohibitive favorite, but he lost. At Kansas City last night he was an overwhelming favorite and he won. None can say that Gotch has lost for gain, and the very fact that even his losing matches have been attended with very little betting, has been the Gibraltar upon which the splendid reputation of the man was built.

"When Gotch defeated Jenkins last night the first words he said were: 'Now I can hold my head up again amongst my friends in Buffalo, Minneapolis, Iowa and Kansas City—all through the West, where my many friends were at a loss to explain my defeats by Jenkins a year ago. The loss of the championship hurt me, but not so much as the fear that I had somehow forfeited the respect of my friends.'"

New York's white light district, the greatest theatrical center in the world, harbors in its midst the leading wrestling gymnasium in America, a place owned by George Bothner, former world's lightweight champion. Those who frequent Bothner's Gymnasium have often laughed themselves almost into a state of hysteria by the antics of an old-timer who acts as trainer and sparring partner to the leading matmen of this day. The name of this wrestler is Leo Pardello, at one time a famed matman of the rough-and-tumble school, and later a movie actor.

Those who are acquainted with their wrestling history will recall Leo as the man who wrestled Frank Gotch for the American championship at Brooke's Casino in Chicago on November 26, 1906, and gave a good account of himself. They will also recollect that Leo, for many years, was ranked among the aces of the mat sport, for he not only knew his holds but was as strong as an ox and was a menace to any man.

Leo always drew well at the gate, not because of his wrestling prowess so much as his fun making once he got into the ring. The critics dubbed him the greatest comedy artist in wrestling, and he still retains that title. Yet Pardello was a highly feared matman. He commanded the respect of all the heavyweights.

When Leo came here from Italy, he was heralded as the greatest and toughest wrestler ever sent to these shores by Sunny Italy and he proved that the advance notices were not exaggerated. After Gotch had thrown Jenkins and was once more acclaimed the kingpin of American grapplers, he looked about for another victim, and he decided to accept a challenge from Pardello. Leo, at the time, had

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been winning many bouts and had a tremendous following among his countrymen. As Chicago was a great wrestling center and had a big Italian population, the match was arranged to take place in the Windy City. On the day of the event, the promoters were astonished by the huge turnout. The pavilion was packed to suffocation.

Pardello had built up a reputation as a fighter and a bone breaker and he tried hard to live up to his name in the match with Gotch. At the sound of the opening gong, he rushed from his corner, head lowered, and made straight for Gotch. Frank lightly sidestepped and, as Leo plunged past, gave him the foot. The Italian was saved from a bad fall by quickly grabbing the top rope as he stumbled forward.

Pardello turned and came in again, but Gotch dropped to both knees and lifted Leo high in the air, then crashed him to the canvas with a dull thud. Pardello immediately started his rough work and began using his elbows and fists when in close.

Gotch took the blows going away, but came in fast and jumped for a headlock. Leo ducked out of danger, but instead of sparring for a wrestling hold, began to feint with both fists, turning the match into a Marquis of Queensberry fiasco. He jabbed his left to the face a couple of times and then missed a wicked right haymaker for the jaw. Gotch avoided the blow by back pedalling quickly along the ropes. The crowd was on its feet in an instant, yelling for Gotch to "soak him" and "kill him," but Frank only smiled and waved both hands at the crowd.

Pardello was mad with rage and followed Gotch about the ring, but in an instant Frank turned the tables by slipping like a flash behind and slamming Pardello to the canvas, at the same time locking on a half-nelson and crotch.

Both of the Italian's shoulders were being gradually forced to the floor when, in a fit of rage, Pardello grabbed Gotch's hair with both hands and started to pull. He managed to yank out two whole handfulls before Gotch let go. They both jumped to their feet, but this time it was Gotch who was the mad man.

He roughed Pardello over to the ropes, and then grabbing him about the waist, plunged to the canvas. He rubbed Pardello's face in the resin, and then quickly grabbing Leo's left foot, drew it backward and began to put on the pressure. The foot was almost half-way up the back when a sharp snap was audible to those about the ringside.

Pardello, half fainting with the pain, fell over on his back, his leg as limp as a rag. Gotch jumped to his feet and started to his corner, but a groan from Pardello made him turn, and in an instant he was assisting the Italian over to his stool. Pardello, with the aid of his seconds, limped to his dressing room and the match was resumed after a ten-minute rest.



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It took the champion exactly fourteen seconds to throw Leo in the second match with a body scissors and wrist lock. An examination by the club's physician showed that a ligament had been snapped in the left knee in the first fall.

Thus had ended Pardello's chances to win a championship. However, the crowd sympathized with the Italian and gave him a great ovation.

Following that bout, Gotch risked his championship against Fred Beell, the woodchopper and giant killer of Marshfield, Wisconsin. An idea of Gotch's confidence in himself may be gleaned from the fact that he never picked his opponents as the champions do today, nor did he hesitate to wrestle as often against topnotchers as opponents could be brought forth who were worth while.

Although Beell was a wrestler whom the stars of his day were anxious to avoid, Gotch accepted him as his opponent only four days after the champion had thrown Pardello. An offer for such a match was made in New Orleans, and Frank consented to tackle Beell in that city on December 1, 1906. Beell, weighing only 169 pounds as against Gotch's 202, threw Frank twice and won the American title. A pigmy in stature in comparison with Gotch, and his inferior in ring science and in strength, Beell nevertheless gained the topmost rung of the wrestling ladder by downing the Iowa farmer.

There were those among the spectators who claimed Fred won the title on a fluke, but the fact remains that he won the crown. Their contention was based on a mishap to Gotch in the second fall.

Gotch, in attempting to leap aside from a spring that his little opponent had made, struck his head against a post and was stunned. He had crashed headlong into it and fell to the floor. In a jiffy, Beell was on top of him. He had no difficulty in turning the dazed title holder on his back to win the second fall. Beell had been thrown in the first and until the mishap, it looked like a sure victory for Gotch.

Ten minutes rest was given the contestants and it was thought that during the intermission, Gotch would recover his strength, but when he came back into the ring, he was still feeling the effects of the blow. He came out groggy and proved unequal to the task of coping with the lightning thrusts and strength of Beell.

When the referee called "time," the champion strode from his corner in a confident manner, approaching Beell as though he would smother him. He tried to yank Beell to him, but the slippery little woodchopper dodged away. Frank tried to corner his man, but again speed saved Beell.

It took several minutes fast work before Gotch was able to catch his man, and then when he tried for his deadly toe hold, Beell squirmed out safely. Twice Gotch caught hold of Beell and threw

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him over his head, but like a cat the little man landed on his feet each time, although Gotch was quick to follow up his advantage.

Finally Gotch worked Beell to the canvas and with a half-nelson and crotch secured the first fall in 31 minutes. Beell was all action in the second bout. He rushed his bigger opponent about the mat and made the spectators gasp with astonishment at his feats of strength. Five times he rushed the champion and five times Gotch was lifted high in the air and hurled over Beell's head.

The fifth and last time almost sapped his entire strength, and although in a badly dazed condition he gamely faced the sixth rush with a confident smile playing about his lips. Beell rushed, Gotch tried to evade and in a mix-up slipped to the canvas, bumping his head against the ringpost with a crash that could be heard all over the arena. Beell picked up the champion, and carrying him to the center of the mat turned him over on his shoulders.

Ten minutes later Gotch was led from his dressing room to the ring, still groggy and bleeding badly from the cut on the head. Time was called for the third bout. Beell, realizing that the champion was almost helpless, rushed in and slammed Gotch to the canvas, working for a full-nelson. Frank tried his best to resist, but at the expiration of five minutes the referee slapped Beell on the back and announced him as the "champion of America."

Gotch collapsed in his dressing room and it took five minutes of strenuous work on the part of his handlers to bring him back to consciousness. The wrestling world was in a flutter over the unexpected outcome, and Beell was the hero of the hour.

Gotch was not satisfied that Beell was his master and as soon as he recovered, he challenged the winner to a return bout. The match was a "hot" one and there was no difficulty in obtaining a promoter to bid for it. The place was Kansas City, one of America's leading wrestling centers, and the date was December 17, only sixteen days after Gotch's loss of the crown.

For that match, Gotch went into strict training as his objective was an engagement for the world title with Hackenschmidt and he knew that he couldn't obtain recognition for such a contest unless he regained the American crown from Beell. The day of the affair found Gotch in tip-top shape. In fact, seldom was he seen in better condition and as a result he toppled Beell from his throne with straight falls, both gained within a short period.

His quick victory did not astonish his followers who wagered heavily on the outcome and with that triumph under his belt, Gotch set out on the trail of Hackenschmidt.



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Chapter X

# When Hackenschmidt Quit

WHEN Gotch regained the American championship from Fred Beell sixteen days after he had lost it to the Marshfield, Wisconsin, woodchopper, he had accomplished all that could be asked of a man seeking a match for a world crown. Gotch had his heart set on winning the title and he knew that there was only one way to acquire it—to beat Hackenschmidt. And that he set out to do.

How to get the match with the Russian Lion was the problem. Gotch undoubtedly had proved himself the leading challenger and the American wrestling public backed his claim for first chance at the title holder. Gotch was by no means the only one to realize that such a bout would prove a natural. Hackenschmidt's victories over the great Tom Jenkins, both at catch-as-catch-can and in the Graeco-Roman style, had left only one good American as an opponent and the Russian, always a keen business man, was aware that such a bout would prove a tremendous drawing card.

Hackenschmidt therefore was not in the least surprised when he received a visit in London from William W. Wittig, of Minneapolis, an American promoter, with negotiations for such a match. Wittig didn't mince words. He knew what the American public wanted, he gauged their interest in such a contest and he figured that he could afford to offer $10,000 to Hackenschmidt to accept terms. And he wasn't mistaken.

Wittig opened the bid with an offer of 2,000 pounds, an equivalent at the time of $10,000, for Hackenschmidt to undertake an American tour in which he would be required to wrestle not more than half a dozen exhibitions, as a preliminary step to a bout with Gotch, the exhibition to be part of the ballyhoo. That was a record fee for a wrestling contest and Hackenschmidt quickly accepted. In the preliminary matches he had to meet Gus Schonlein (Americus) a splendid wrestler who had tackled Stanislaus Zybszko for an hour in a terrific struggle and whom Gotch had taken almost an hour and a half to beat. The exhibition lasted fifteen minutes and was termed a draw.

Instead of only six matches, Hackenschmidt took on several others, despite the fact, as he said after his defeat by Gotch, that he had been suffering from water on the knee. The match with Gotch was clinched before Hackenschmidt reached this country and the date was set for April 3, 1908. The place was the Dexter Park Pavilion and it was also decided that the visitor would train at the Chicago Athletic Club.



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It was the last-named part of the agreement that caused a falling out between Hackenschmidt and the backers of the match. Hackenschmidt was accustomed to training in private and when he reached Chicago and found that his training was to be done before a critical gathering of newspapermen and wrestling fans daily, he strongly objected.

That, he declared, was not his idea of training for a serious match and he requested that he be permitted to do his workouts only before the eyes of his associates. He objected to the scrutiny of curious strangers who criticized his movements, especially, as he declared to the promoter, because of the state of his knee—an ailment which he didn't want the public nor Gotch to know. When the club insisted on public training and the Russian persisted in his refusal, the club shut its door on him and from that time to the day of the match, he did little training other than walks and light exercises in the hotel.

In that Chicago match, Gotch was magnificently trained and seconded by two great veterans, Farmer Burns, who was responsible for Gotch's early development, and Jack Carkeek, who had toured England as a champion at the time that Hackenschmidt was at the height of his glory, and whose intimate knowledge of the Russian's methods and character made him an invaluable aid to Gotch.

In that bout, Gotch gained a victory that was the crowning triumph to a remarkable athletic career. Never before in American wrestling history, nor ever since, was there a match to equal in thrills that Chicago affair in which most of those who were present openly charged Hackenschmidt with quitting but which he, to this day, emphatically denies. They struggled for more than two hours before the Russian Lion "gave in."

A crowd of ten thousand, many of whom had come from great distances, paid prices ranging from $2.00 to $20.00 for seats. The betting favored the Russian by 5 to 2. Gotch weighed 196, and his opponent weighed 208.

Hackenschmidt entered the ring at 10:14 and was loudly cheered. He faced the crowd smiling and seemed confident. He was accompanied by Americus, the Baltimore wrestler, and Rudy Unholz, the Boer fighter.

Gotch appeared a minute later, being received with a thundering and prolonged cheer. The audience rose to its feet in deference to the marvelous Gotch. He was accompanied by Farmer Burns, who was his trainer, and Jack Carkeek. The contestants received their instructions from Referee Ed Smith, famous Chicago sports writer, shook hands and started the bout.

Hackenschmidt crouched and they sparred, with Gotch circling around him for three minutes. Then Hack clinched, but they broke again. Frank seemed nervous, but the champion was as cool as a


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cucumber. After ten minutes of this tugging, Gotch started his tactics of roughing up his opponent and kidding him. This worried the Russian who lost his patience and kept his temper with great difficulty.

Hackenschmidt finally tried for a body hold, but could not reach his elusive adversary. The Russian then turned to the referee, complaining that Gotch had butted him. It was generally known that Frank was no parlor snake when in the ring. Another half hour of this mauling and sparring followed and it failed to satisfy the crowd. Then came some thrilling work with many pretty executions, after which the contestants again set down to tugging and mauling.

Fifty minutes after the bout started, Hackenschmidt slapped Gotch to the mat. The latter bounded to his feet, and the pulling and hauling continued. An old cut under Hack's left eye was opened and it bled profusely. The bout at this stage was full of excitement and the throng cheered lustily. Then when the tugging began again, hisses rent the air. The gathering wanted no more of that. The fans howled for action and they soon got it.

Both missed leg and body holds, Gotch taking the offensive for the first time. One hour after the start nothing approaching a hold had been gained by either man, but both were full of fight. Fifteen minutes more of the tiresome work followed. Then the Russian suddenly attacked with fury, but Gotch wiggled away and the shoulder-to-shoulder tactics began again.

Frank's defense puzzled George, his smile was the most aggravating thing he had dealt with in many a day, and finally, raging with fury, the Russian straightened up and looked at Gotch.

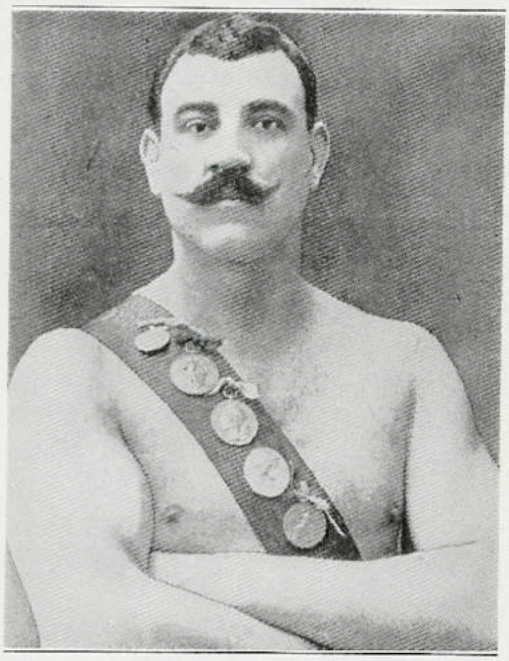
"Come on and wrestle," said Gotch. The crowd cheered. They tussled all over the ring and then went down together with Gotch on top. He tried the famous toe hold which he had originated, and which he had used to defeat the greater part of his opponents, but the champion slipped away from it.

Hackenschmidt repeatedly protested to the referee of foul tactics. He accused Gotch of gouging his eyes and also insisted that the referee compel Gotch to take a hot shower to rid his body of an abundance of oil. At one time Hackenschmidt offered to take a shower also, just to show his sportsmanship, but Referee Smith refused to heed the complaints. He remarked that Hackenschmidt should have noted that before the match got under way.

Two hours of the battle had passed when Gotch sidestepped an advance of the Russian and roughed him with his knuckles, butted him under the chin and, generally speaking, got him in an irate state of mind. They came to a clinch.

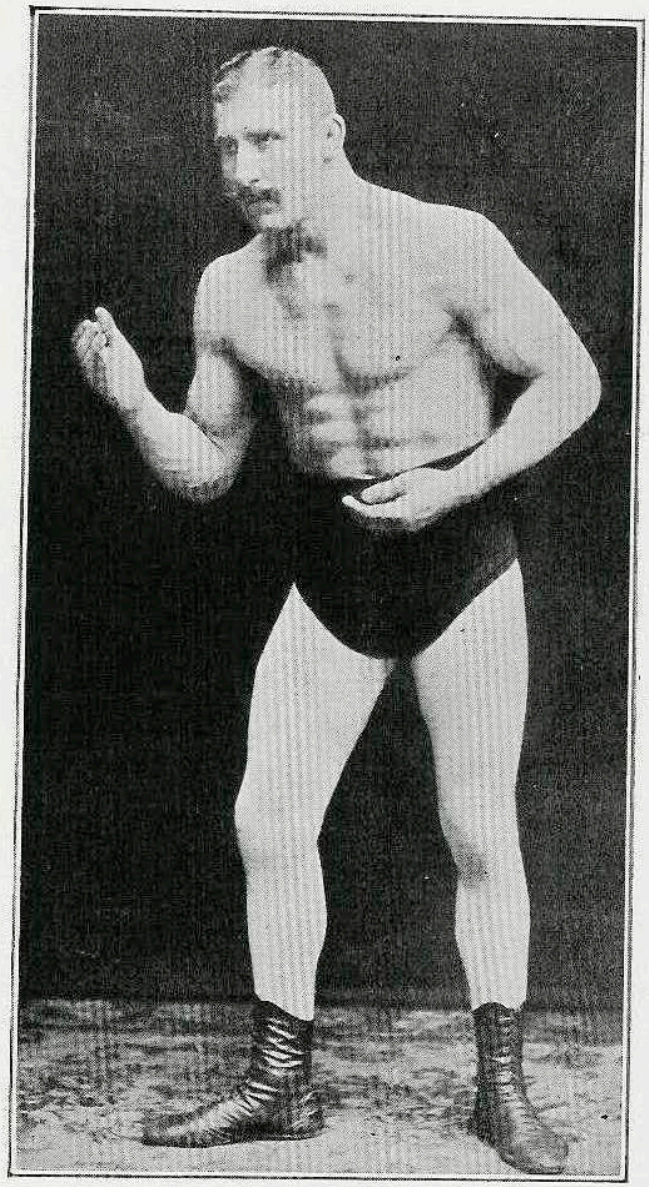
Gotch slammed his opponent to the mat and came within an ace again of securing the toe hold. He followed this up by lifting Hack-

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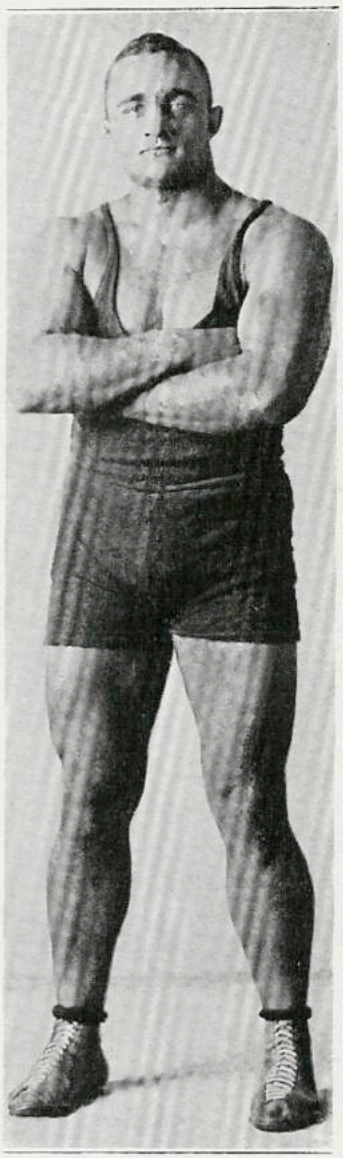
Paul Pons, the French Hercules, who was a great weight lifting champion and a mighty fine wrestler.


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Ernest Siegfried, the German Oak.

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Wladek Zbyszko, brother of Stanislaus, a wrestler who at one time was claimant of the world crown.


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This snapshot was taken at Lahore, India, by Zbyszko in 1926 after his match with Gama. Every man in the photo is a famous Hindu wrestler. The most renowned are in the back row with Zbyszko. The first from the left is Fazal. The third is Goonga, then comes Zbyszko and Tiger Daula.



Scene in the match between Gama and Zbyszko. Gama won in short order. Zbyszko couldn't get his bearings in the mud.

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enschmidt clear off the mat and throwing him on his shoulders with terrific force. The European's spirit was broken.

The lines deepened on his face, the hoots of the crowd hurt his feelings, and after considering the matter for a few seconds he decided it was time to quit. There were few of the spectators who were not willing to give the verdict to the Iowa giant. He was in a better condition, he was quick and clever and showed a vastly superior knowledge of the game.

The end came so quickly that the crowd could scarcely comprehend what had happened. Not until the referee had announced that Hackenschmidt had surrendered the championship of the world to Gotch did the full significance of the event strike home.

Then the excited men swarmed into the ring, surging about Gotch until the police came to his rescue and drove the crowd back through the ropes. The match showed principally that Gotch had a defensive system that was hard to break.

Hackenschmidt refused to explain his action to W. W. Wittig, promoter of the bout, simply shaking his head and refusing to reply when asked why he had not surrendered merely the first fall and taken another chance with Gotch.

After the match, Hackenschmidt, interviewed by the newspapermen, said:

"When I saw myself weakening, due to my knee injury, I decided there was no use going any further. Gotch is a great wrestler, the best man I've yet met, but he uses unfair tactics."

George was a sorry sight when the match was over. He looked like an old bare-knuckle warrior after a fight of several hundred rounds. The left side of his head was swollen, his left eye was inflamed and his eyelids were large and lacerated. This, Hackenschmidt claimed, was due to Gotch's thumbs.

The Russian, in spite of the satisfied report which he gave to the press in an official way, was not pleased with the way the match went, particularly the rough tactics of the American. He laid great stress for many days on the oily condition of Gotch's body. He gave out interviews in which he said that this oil had been rubbed in so that it could not be seen, but when Gotch perspired it came out on his skin and did not allow him to get a hold.

And here we have the statement by Gotch, made after the match: "It is very likely that I may never be as good a man at the game again. The strain of such a contest is not appreciated by the audience. During the first hour of the match the two of us perspired freely and the last hour neither of us sweat a bit. We had worked all the moisture out of our systems. I lost just nine pounds during those two hours on the mat. Think of working nine pounds of moisture out of a man's system! You can see that it is a shock in itself.



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"My tongue became dry, swollen and as black as a piece of coal. So did Hackenschmidt's. My skin became absolutely crisp to the cracking point and I burned like an oven. Such a contest is devastating to a man's system, no matter how strong and well-trained he may be. The game is a constant strain and is sure to undermine his system more or less if he keeps at it.

"Last fall and winter I went around the country taking on four or five men a day for a period of forty-six consecutive days. Few people realize what that means—a constant and wearying grind.

"In the match with Hackenschmidt I got my first feeling of ultimate victory when we stood up to be photographed before the match began. I reached out my hand to shake with Hack and when I grasped his hand it shook and trembled. Something said to me right then, 'Frank, this fellow is worried,' and it gave me much courage.

"I made Hack reach for me all the time and never did he get a chance to exert his strength close up. He was forced to use his power at arm's length, which greatly diminished it, of course.

"Hack's main fault, I should say, was that he thinks too slowly. Before the match an old-time English wrestler wrote me a long letter in which he told me of ten different tricks that Hack would use, and he described just how he would go about each one of them. When I got in the ring I found I could not have known more about Hack's style had I been wrestling with him for years. My friend's letter had hit every move on the head. And every move the Russian made he telegraphed me in advance, which shows that he thinks too slowly.

"Wrestling is a grand sport and so long as it is on the square it appeals to the public as few sports do. I have never wrestled before a poor audience. Every match I have had has drawn crowded houses, and I think my popularity, such as it is, is due in part to the general feeling that I have kept my end of the game clean and have never faked.

"For nine years I have been at it, meeting all comers, wrestling under all conditions and have never yet mixed up in a queer match, or failed to give the public my best.

"It is gratifying to me, of course, to hold the undisputed world's title. I am glad it's here in America, glad I brought it here. I expect to be an Iowa farmer all my life, and I expect to enjoy it. I hope that every year may find me a little better man in some way than I was before. I want to be a good citizen, helpful and useful."

Stung by the criticism of American wrestling fans and scribes who charged him with being a "quitter," Hackenschmidt, on his return to Europe, bitterly complained of the unsportsmanship of his opponent. He charged that the referee was unfair in not forcing Gotch to get the oil from his body and in not warning Frank for his foul tactics.

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The Russian Lion, a keen student and highly cultured individual, resented the American criticism and that he holds that against them to this day, is obvious from an article which he recently wrote for the *Empire News* of Manchester, one of England's greatest newspapers. In that article, part of a series which appeared under his name, Hackenschmidt renewed the charges he had made in America. Quoting from the *Empire News,* we have the following as his version:

"All I knew when I accepted the match with Gotch in which I had lost the title, all I know about him and the men who had wrestled and beaten him and in turn had been quite easily beaten by me, forbade my taking things too seriously in training. I never for a moment thought of preparations to defeat my ends by foul means. I had no such experiences in my past matches so it did not enter my mind at all that such things had to be reckoned with.

"After our match was started I immediately found that it was almost impossible for me to get a grip on his body. I protested to the referee about the condition of Gotch's body, asking that we should both have a hot bath before attempting to continue the match but my protest went unheeded. The referee simply signalled for us to continue.

"Gotch was so oily that it was impossible to push or pull him or to do anything else with him that would give me control over his movements and as the minutes passed and he got warmer, my difficulties increased. It was like trying to grip a well-buttered eel.

"Only by exerting many times the strength ordinarily required could I retain a grasp on that greasy, slippery mountain of flesh. He was quite content to rely on that state of his skin and to let me do all the work, knowing full well that I was bound to wear myself out while he retained all his strength. And that is just what happened.

"And the sympathy of that huge crowd was entirely on his side! All their howling, cheers and shouts of encouragement went for Frank, though what they had to cheer and shout about, I cannot to this day imagine!

"But that did not bother me a bit. What troubled me was that the referee was evidently indifferent to what was being put across on me. The only thing I could do was to go on and at least make as good a showing as I could under such awful conditions.

"I attacked throughout. That was always my way of wrestling. And all the time, from the very start until the end, I had to rub my hands on my wrestling tights to get the grease away. My wrestling costume soon was as greasy as was Gotch's body, but I could not rid myself of the oil at all.

"Constantly Gotch's thumbs and fingers were hovering near my eyes as though he meant to gouge my eyes out, and constantly, when our heads were together, he rubbed his against mine with the result



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that some terrible chemical exuded from his hair and trickled down my forehead into my eyes causing me excruciating pain, blinding me, making me almost oblivious to the terrible job I had in hand.

"It was hopeless for me to try to get him into a position that would allow me to slip behind him and overpower him, though I knew all the time that in strength and energy I was infinitely superior to him.

"And still the match went on and Gotch's methods became worse and worse. He no longer seemed to be merely thinking about gouging my eyes; he actually attempted to do so. He pulled my hair and always he took every opportunity to rub his head and forehead against mine. And yet not a voice was raised to protest against his methods, no word of rebuke or caution came from the man who was in the ring with us as referee, Ed Smith, presumably in the interests of fair play and to guard American sportsmanship.

"For more than two hours I struggled against such odds without making the slightest impression upon my terrible opponent whose language was as disgusting as his tactics.

"After two hours my exhaustion could hardly be imagined. I could scarcely breathe or swallow, my strength was gone—not in resisting Gotch who never got a hold on me that a child would have noticed, but in the effort to overcome conditions that were a disgrace to him and to his country.

"So in the end, without an explanation, I pushed Gotch aside and walked out of the ring. Gotch thus won the match. But I had not been beaten by Gotch. I was beaten by the oil which had been rubbed into his skin constantly during the months of his preparation for me at the hands of his trainer—Jack Carkeek."

And thus you have the story of the man who to this day is regarded by many critics, including Jack Curley, who brought him to America, the greatest wrestler of all time.



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Chapter XI

# International Storm

WHEN Frank Gotch wrested the world's heavyweight wrestling crown from George Hackenschmidt, he started an international controversy such as the Heenan-Sayers famous fistic battle had done years before and the Dempsey-Tunney "long count" of the present era. The result of that match did more than raise a storm on both sides of the Atlantic.

There were the staunch followers of Gotch who upheld the tactics of the American and declared that he had forced the great "Hack" to quit. There were others, equally as strong in their contention that Gotch had used most unfair tactics, especially in gouging and the use of kerosene and cocoanut oil on his skin and still others who strongly condemned the referee, for not disqualifying Gotch instead of merely cautioning him.

The American newspapers were not wholly in support of the native son. Many openly declared in huge headlines that Hackenschmidt had received a "raw deal" and naturally the British newspapers took up the cry and it was a repetition of the Heenan-Sayers dispute. Yet, despite all the controversy, the keenest of critics argued that Gotch had rightfully earned the crown and that he had proved his mastery of Europe's "Wonder Man," but you couldn't prove that by Hackenschmidt.

True, he was a game sportsman and decided not to add oil to the fires by vitriolic attacks on his adversary, but he didn't have to do that. His supporters in England, where he was the most popular athlete of the age, did that for him and eventually he was compelled to take cognizance of it and admit his feelings were considerably ruffled.

By way of selecting an example of the type of stories that were printed by some of the American leading sport critics, I shall quote only the statement of William F. Kirk, a Hearst writer of repute.

"It is to be deplored that George Hackenschmidt received such a deal in this country. Gotch was bathed in perspiration after a few minutes of wrestling as a result of using a combination of oil and grease on his skin that was invisible before the start of the match but came to the surface within five minutes after the bout got under way and it was impossible for Hackenschmidt to obtain an effective grip. He couldn't get a satisfactory hold any more than a child could hold a greased pig at a country fair. His body was oiled—a direct infraction of the rules.

"Of course Gotch is now entitled to the world championship crown





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formerly worn by the Russian Lion. He earned it by gouging his thumbs into 'Hack's' eyes, butting the Russian's mouth with a thick skull, punching his nose with his fists and otherwise causing the Russian great mental strain and anguish. He was merciless and should have been compelled by Referee Smith either to play fair, according to the rules of the game, or should have been disqualified."

Thus we have the story of an eyewitness who was unprejudiced, a writer who looked upon the match only from the point of view of clean sportsmanship. But Ed Smith, the official, didn't quite agree with Kirk. He declared that Hackenschmidt was forced to quit by a wrestler who was his superior and who had outgamed him. Here is part of his public statement:

"There may be some things in the world of wrestling that George Hackenschmidt does well, but outside of quitting more or less gracefully, he did not show that he knew much about the game in his match with Gotch. It must be truthfully said, and in the saying, the foreigner gets all that's coming to him, that Frank Gotch, the Iowa farmer, is a better wrestler than Hackenschmidt in all departments of the sport.

"Yes, one can go further and say that Gotch is a better built man in the catch-as-catch-can style of wrestling, a more powerful man when symmetry, poise, balance and even distribution of weight and power are taken into consideration. Hackenschmidt is the ideal man when it comes to toying with long-barred dumb-bells, a wonder in the London music halls, a regular lion for European nobility, but he is not the great wrestler that European admirers think he is.

"There is but one way to look at this match and that is to say that Gotch made 'Hack' quit by bulling into him and showing him that he, Gotch, knows more about the game than does 'Hack' and that he is a far gamer man in every respect. That's where lies Gotch's superiority.

"Hackenschmidt's boasted strength was not in evidence. His complaint that he could not get a firm grip on Gotch's body was well founded. He simply could not get any sort of a grip on the American champion and had to content himself with squeezing Gotch's wrists and occasionally getting a grip around the Iowa man's biceps and digging his thumbs in good and hard.

"It is my opinion that 'Hack' was completely exhausted when he got off the floor after two hours of pulling and hauling and announced that he had resigned the heavyweight title to Gotch. He did not appear to be so tired, but the gruelling that he received, something entirely unexpected, was too much for him.

"It is doubtful if Hackenschmidt was ever held in a so cramped-up, uncomfortable position for such a long time in his entire career. Gotch kept the wrestler's head pulled down low, constantly tugging

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at the back of the neck and varying the attacks with grips under the chin and across the bridge of the nose. The 'Powerful Lion' complained bitterly that Gotch was jabbing his thumb into his eye and he complained of many other things, but I do not consider that Gotch's transgressions were worthy of more than a caution."

With this statement, one may draw his own conclusions on the merits of the controversy. In this story of the rise of American wrestling, we have now given a detailed account of the match and because of the arguments, pro and con, we have recounted the stories of the principals, Gotch, Hackenschmidt and the official referee and with this, we must now call the affair a closed one. There is no doubt that the first Hackenschmidt-Gotch bout takes its place in American wrestling history as does the Sullivan-Corbett bout in pugilism—the most important and most discussed in its field.

And now let us go back to Gotch's defense of his crown. About a year and a half before Gotch took the world's title from George Hackenschmidt at Chicago, he had been held to a draw by Dr. B. F. Roller at Seattle, Wash., in a bout that lasted a full hour. As neither gained a fall, one of the first men to come forward to dispute Gotch's claim to the world's honors was Dr. Roller. The two came together in a finish match for the championship at Seattle, July 1, 1908, but Roller was defeated in two straight falls, 15 minutes, 25 seconds and 21 minutes, 54 seconds, after taxing Frank's capacity to the limit.

Probably no gamer man ever took to the mat than Roller. Faster with his hands and feet than the mighty "Son of Iowa," but handicapped in brute strength, height and weight, Roller gave one of the finest exhibitions of stamina and grit ever witnessed.

Frank Gotch usually came out with a rush, and the quicker he got his man down, the better he liked it. So it was in the Roller match. They met with a bang in ring center at the call of Referee Eddie Gaffney; and Roller dived for the legs, bringing Gotch down with a crash.

He tried to steal the champion's thunder in clamping on a toe hold, but Gotch assumed a sitting position and then leaped to his feet, at the same time grabbing the doctor about the waist and lifting him shoulder high. He swirled around a few times and then banged Roller to the floor, leaping on top at the same instant.

He literally routed Roller off the pad when the Doctor locked his legs, while Gotch was trying to get his hand between for a crotch hold. Gaffney ordered the men to the center of the mat and Gotch yanked Roller's feet from underneath him, at the same time standing upon his head. The Doctor managed to shake loose, but Gotch followed him to the ropes, throwing his man with a waist lock.

Five times in the next five minutes the champion tried to get his toe hold working and five times Roller kicked his way free. Sud-



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denly shifting his attack, Gotch slipped on a crotch hold and as Roller wriggled forward clamped on a half-nelson.

Frank then swung his left leg over and kneeled on Roller's arm and, with the new shift, both Roller's shoulders slowly caved in to the canvas. It was the first time that Roller had ever been thrown.

The big fellows were allowed fifteen minutes rest before coming out for the second fall and Roller came out fighting mad. The crowd was yelling like mad for the local man and calling for Roller to "scissor him." The Seattle wrestler had defeated Farmer Burns, Westergaard and Beel with his body scissors, but the one time he tried it on Gotch, the champion simply walked out of it.

Gotch was smiling broadly as he answered the call for the second bout. He rushed Roller to the ropes and off the mat. Referee Gaffney signalled for the men to come to ring center and Gotch, bending low, lifted Roller up in his arms as though he were a child.

"Where do you want him, Gaffney?" he asked.

The referee pointed to the mat and Gotch slammed his man down hard. Roller jumped to his feet, but Gotch grabbed him by one foot and, lifting it shoulder high, had the doctor hopping about. The crowd cheered at Roller's efforts to keep upright.

For the first time during the bout, Gotch got his toe hold on right. Getting a firm grip on Roller's toes, Gotch slowly worked his thigh in between the doctor's calf and thigh and then began to put the pressure on, bending the foot upward.

Roller lay on his stomach, gripping the canvas with his nails and clinching his teeth in an effort to keep back the pain. Gotch only worked a little closer and held tight. He was waiting for Roller to move his body up the fraction of an inch, just enough to allow him to get his own leg in a trifle closer to the crotch and then increase the pressure on the hold, almost to the breaking point.

Had Roller played the game according to custom as Gotch figured he would, it would either have been a case for Roller to flop over on his back or have his leg snapped like a pipe stem. But Roller stood the gruelling and instead of raising his body, suddenly wriggled forward an inch or two, at the same time shooting up his free foot in a terrific kick to the champion's nose.

The effort freed him but he limped painfully when he got to his feet. Gotch came up with him and grinningly danced before his man, rushing him off the mat.

Roller was extremely weak, but fought back gamely. Gotch refused to be denied and, grabbing Roller about the waist, stood the doctor upon his head, then righting him, slammed him to the canvas, clamping on a crotch and a half-nelson when Roller was literally still in the air.

Holding on tight to Roller, Gotch rose to his feet and walking

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deliberately to the center of the mat, slammed his opponent to the canvas with a smash. Roller landed on the back of his head and was knocked groggy. Gotch jumped in with a half-nelson and both of Roller's shoulders touched the mat in exactly 21 minutes, 54 seconds. He had to be assisted to his dressing room by Joe Carroll and Lonnie Austin, while Gotch lightly leaped over the top rope and ran up the aisle to his dressing room.

Like many professional boxers who had won a world title, Frank Gotch decided to turn to the footlights after wrestling the crown from off the head of Hackenschmidt, and unlike most athletes who failed to click, he met with considerable success despite his modesty, which prompted him to state publicly, that as an actor he was a good wrestler. His contribution to the stage was in the form of a vaudeville sketch in which he played in the larger cities, including New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago. In July, 1908, four months after he had annexed the world title, he went to England with his company and did the larger cities there.

For his British appearance, he had a playlet written for him, called "All about a Bout" and wherever he appeared, capacity houses greeted him. When Gotch went to England he was warned in advance that Hackenschmidt would be on his trail, for the Russian Lion persisted in broadcasting that he had been jobbed of his crown and decided that the best way to get even with Gotch was to harass him. He, therefore, challenged Gotch's right to the title and he obtained sufficient support from the European papers, especially in England, to make things uncomfortable for the champion.

Although Gotch was in England only to present his play and not to engage in wrestling bouts, he was so molested that he decided to give Hack the chance he again sought. The newspapermen kept on Frank's trail from morning until night and the stories of the jobbing of Hackenschmidt did not aid any in the gate receipts of the American, hence Gotch summoned the scribes to his hotel and announced that if Hackenschmidt thought he was jobbed of his crown, he would be given an opportunity to regain it.

In fact, so riled was Gotch, that he asked that the bout be arranged within a fortnight. Negotiations were begun and just when it appeared that the match would be arranged, Hackenschmidt suddenly disappeared from the picture. On a flimsy claim, Hackenschmidt withdrew his challenge and decided to let things stand as they were until such time as he could again go to America, where he hoped to get the return engagement. This he did receive two years later, as will be told in another chapter.

In the meantime, things were happening in England that made Gotch feel that he was not a very welcome visitor. While in Sheffield, he was persistently attacked by a local pride, George Dinnie, a



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wrestler who called Gotch "the fraud champion." Gotch didn't mind that much, but when Dinnie's friends took up his claim for a championship bout and even went so far as to threaten the American, that proved too much. Gotch regarded Dinnie's bold defi in the nature of a joke and on the stage, smilingly passed it up with the remark that "Dinnie had better go out and get a reputation before attempting to battle for the world crown."

But Gotch had not apparently figured on Dinnie's friends who raised the cry that Frank was afraid, and otherwise made things disagreeable for him. The day following Gotch's stage remark, he and his trainer, Emil Klank, now one of the leading wrestling promoters in the northwest, were out for a brisk walk and run. They had gone from their hotel to the countryside and much to their surprise, they saw the headline in a paper:

"Champion refuses to meet Dinnie. American afraid to lose his title."

Crowds quickly gathered about Gotch and some of Dinnie's friends in the circle began to hoot Frank and cheer Dinnie. That was the last straw, for Gotch turned to Klank and said:

"Emil, he can't get away with that. I'm going to meet him if it's the last thing I do. I'll take that hick on tonight and stop the show if necessary. He won't make a fool out of me any longer."

The Music Hall, where Gotch was playing, was agreed upon as the place for the event, and on the evening when the match was to be staged, a gathering of 3,000 persons, a capacity house, was on hand to greet the local "wonder." Wagers were freely made that Dinnie would win and the few Americans present, grabbed up all the money they could lay their hands on, backing Gotch.

It was a sadly disappointed home crowd that left the theatre after the match, for Gotch so far outclassed his opponent that he made Dinnie look like a raw novice. Gotch won the first fall in 1.06 and the second in 55 seconds, close to a record for a championship match. Only in his match with Zbyszko did he better that time.

To show his utter contempt for the prowess of Dinnie, Gotch agreed to throw their champion twice in thirty minutes. Gotch was met with a storm of hisses and catcalls when he appeared on the stage, while Dinnie was acclaimed to the skies. Gotch was angry clear through and at the call of time, came out like a mad bull. He rushed Dinnie into the wings and grabbing him about the waist, dragged him "up stage" to the footlights.

Quicker than a flash, he slammed the Englishman to the canvas, and the next instant had Dinnie's left leg half way up his back in a bone-splitting toe hold. Dinnie flopped over on his back in exactly 1 min., 6 secs. The second fall was even gained in quicker time—55 sec., with a crotch and half-nelson.

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Gotch jumped to his feet the instant that the referee slapped him on the back, but Dinnie raised one shoulder and loudly began to yell that he was not down. The house of Dinnie was in an uproar, hooting Frank and yelling for another fall.

"You had better tell the crowd you were down," Gotch yelled to Dinnie from the wings of the stage, but Dinnie only yelled the louder.

"You people saw that he never had me down for that second fall, didn't you?" Dinnie yelled over the footlights. "He's afraid to come out again for fear I'll throw him."

For probably the first time in his life Gotch lost his head. As he slowly walked out on the stage his face was the color of a sheet and he could not talk. He merely stood in the centre of the mat motioning Dinnie to come to him for another bout. The Englishman came forth and the crowd set up a fearful howl.

Gotch caught him by his right hand, yanked the Englishman toward him, picked him up bodily, lifted him shoulder high, crashed him to the canvas with a thud, jumped on him, and in less than five seconds had Dinnie's leg half way up his back in the cruel toehold.

"I'm down, I'm down," frantically screamed the disconcerted Dinnie at the top of his lungs, at the same time beating fiercely with both hands on the mat.

"You're only kidding yourself; you're not down so soon," smiled Gotch into Dinnie's face, at the same time keeping the pressure going.

Dinnie was in mortal agony that his leg would snap and almost fainted from the pain.

Finally, after a little extra shove, Gotch allowed Dinnie to get to his feet. To the credit of the man it must be stated that he painfully limped to the footlights and told his friends that "Gotch was the greatest wrestler of all time."

Following his return to this country, Gotch decided to defend his title against all comers and the first big match in which he engaged was that with Yussiff Mahmout. That contest, one of the greatest in the career of Gotch, took place on April 14, 1909, at the Dexter Park Pavilion, Chicago, and was a finish match. The Bulgarian wonder was tossed in straight falls in a fast and furious affair that kept the huge crowd in a state of excitement from start to finish.

Gotch won both falls with crotch and half-nelson holds, the first in eight minutes and the second, in nine minutes and 10 seconds, respectively. Quite different from the hour or more "phony matches" that are announced as championship affairs these days. With Gotch, wrestling was a business and the future gates meant nothing to him. He always went in to win in the shortest possible time and that's why he was so great an attraction.

Mahmout had gone through the American wrestlers like a whirlwind, defeating Beell, Americus, Cutler and a host of lesser lights in



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a sensational manner. He had abnormal strength and was possessed of extreme confidence in himself. He always wrestled in his bare feet and in order to get the match with Gotch, he consented to forfeit $500 to be permitted to come in without shoes, when Gotch had objected to the "Balkan Lion" wrestling in this manner.

Gotch was in the pink of condition when he crawled through the ropes the evening of the match. He was prepared for a contest of endurance and had prepared to take the heart out of the "Lion" by roughing him.

The victory of the champion is all the more notable inasmuch as he did not use his famous toehold in bringing about the downfall of the powerful foreigner, whose shoulders had not hitherto been put to the mat in America.

Gotch was able to get almost any hold he desired. The match was fast and exciting from the time the men entered the ring. It was full of action, snap, dash, and vim from start to finish. It was so short that there was not a single idle moment between the two falls.

At the word go from Referee Ed. W. Smith of Chicago, Gotch was all action. He came out with his head lowered and rough-housed Mahmout off the mat. He clung onto the top rope but Gotch slid behind him and with a wrench had him squirming in the air and in the center of the mat. He slammed Mahmout down on all fours and then started working on his legs.

For the first three minutes the men rolled about the ring without either getting a hold. Finally after three minutes of wrestling Gotch secured a hold on Mahmout's left leg and threw him to the mat.

The American champion was after the foreigner like a wildcat, and the Bulgarian responded with every ounce of strength in his physique, but could not break the hold of Gotch. Mahmout bridged and used every artifice in his repertoire to forestall the fall that appeared to be approaching.

Gotch gradually forced his opponent's shoulders to the mat. It was a magnificent test of strength between two great exponents of the wrestling game, but the champion, cheered on by his admirers, finally secured a crotch and half-nelson hold, and Referee Smith gave him the fall in eight minutes. Mahmout's shoulders were pinned to the mat for the first time since he had been in this country.

The crowd cheered and yelled for several minutes after the fall. The sudden ending of the fall came as a complete surprise to the spectators who expected the foreigner to give the champion a harder struggle.

Gotch and Mahmout started the second fall at 11:29. After a minute of fiddling in the middle of the ring, the men mixed and Mahmout put Gotch down on the mat. After some sharp work

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Gotch wriggled out of the Bulgarian's hold and assumed the aggressive.

Gotch tried repeatedly for the deadly toehold, but Mahmout fought harder than before, and the American was unable to get the bare foot, Gotch obtained a bar lock on Mahmout, but the man wriggled off the mat.

Referee Smith called them to the center of the ring. Mahmout allowed Gotch his old hold. Gotch soon got a crotch and half-nelson, but Mahmout wriggled out.

The struggle waxed fast and furious with Mahmout on the defensive all the time. Gotch then got the same hold that won the first fall for him, a crotch and half-nelson.

Mahmout realized the danger, fought like a wildcat to break the hold, but it was of no avail. Despite the Bulgarian's immense strength and ability he was pinned to the mat for the final fall in 9 minutes, 10 seconds.

Mahmout was a crushed man when taken to his corner. He simply shook his head in a heart-broken silence and waited for his manager, Antonine Pierri, to lead him from the ring. To his credit it must be added that he did not come out with any statement after the match; did not say his condition was faulty, or quibble over a single point in the game and absolutely refused a second match.

With the Mahmout bout over, Gotch had proved that he was a champion of champions. He showed that he had mastered the sport to such extent that none of those who were his challengers could stand up before him. With the championship in his possession, the Iowa farmer reaped the fortune which all title holders go after. He appeared in exhibitions, on the stage and in bouts where the money kept flowing in. He toured the East and the middle-West and six months after the Mahmout bout he found himself in New York where he was hard pressed for a match by Stanislaus Zbyszko, the giant Pole.

Zbyszko had come to this country primarily to force the issue and to obtain a championship bout. He had appeared throughout Europe with signal success and saw no reason why he couldn't duplicate the feats in this land. He had taken on the cream of the talent and proved himself the master, so why not, Gotch, he asked.

After considerable dickering, he finally caught up with the Iowan and they were matched for a bout in Buffalo. The contest took place on November 25, 1909, but it was not billed as a championship. The bout was keenly contested and lasted one hour, with the official verdict at the end of that period being a draw. It was the splendid performance that Zbyszko gave in that match that earned him a return bout later.



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Chapter XII

# Second Gotch-'Hack' Bout

THE story of American wrestling at its greatest is the story of the career of its most illustrious champion—Frank Gotch. That is why we have dwelt so minutely on the mat contests of the Iowa Farmer. Gotch was to wrestling history in this country what John L. Sullivan was to boxing. He dominated the field. Through his extraordinary ability, he gained for wrestling many converts and brought the sport into such favor that it became as big in the promotorial field as was boxing.

In our last chapter we told of the first match between Stanislaus Zbyszko and Gotch, a contest that was staged in Buffalo, lasted one hour and ended in a draw. It was that match that made the Pole feel that he was Gotch's master and caused him to trail the Iowan until he received a return engagement, one which proved a rather sad one for Zbyszko.

Stanislaus was the chief figure in the crowning achievement of Gotch on June 1, 1910, at Chicago, when the world's champion flattened the Pole in the record time of 6 and 2/5 seconds. Zbyszko, at the time, was in his prime. He scaled far more than his rival and was huskier and a marvel of physical perfection, yet Gotch pinned his shoulders to the mat in time that never has been equalled in a championship match. The time of that bout proves the honesty of that match as compared to the many "phony" contests that are billed as title affairs these days.

Prior to that bout, Zbyszko had beaten every wrestler of note in this country and abroad and, because of their hour draw in Buffalo the previous year, when they met at the Coliseum of Chicago, there was a crowded house to see the action. Zbyszko was the first to enter the ring, accompanied by his handlers. He received a rousing reception, but not one as thunderous as that which greeted the champion on his appearance. The roof almost caved in under the hurricane of cheers.

He immediately strode over to where Zbyszko was sitting and grasped his hand in a friendly shake. It was 10.11 when Referee Fleming started the contest and, 6 2/5 seconds later, he tapped Gotch on the back, signalling the first fall. The fall came so quickly that the spectators could scarcely believe their eyes. And it could readily be seen that they were dumbfounded.

The fall was obtained with a simple trick. When time was called, Gotch, who was standing in his corner with his back to Zbyszko,



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wheeled like a flash and ran towards his opponent. Zbyszko had not expected such quick action and he extended his hand for the usual shake. But Gotch fooled him. The men had shaken hands before the bell and Frank had no intention of doing it all over again.

Instead, he extended his hand and, as Zbyszko was about to grasp it, Gotch dived underneath and slammed the Pole to the canvas with a leg hold. In an instant, Gotch jammed in a bar-arm-lock and half-nelson and Zbyszko fell back to the canvas. The time was exactly four seconds from the time that Gotch ran forward to the crash.

Fleming slapped Gotch on the shoulder, but Frank kept up the pressure to make sure. Two and a fifth seconds later Fleming again slapped Gotch on the back and this time Gotch jumped to his feet with a grin. Had he arisen at the first signal of triumph, he would have been credited with the first fall in four seconds. Gotch explained his continued action with the statement that he wanted to be certain that his man was down.

The Coliseum was a riot of noise when the crowd realized that Zbyszko had been thrown. An intermission of five minutes was taken, the Pole protesting the fall all during the wait. Suddenly there was a crash in the Pole's corner and the crowd jumped to its feet with a yell. The strain on the ropes, caused by the resting of arms and bodies of the wrestler and his attendants, had caused the ropes to snap and the post to crack off at the bottom. It was impossible to fix it, so the match was continued with one side of the roped ring sagging down almost to the floor.

Zbyszko came out cautiously for the second match. Gotch was extremely confident as he walked out. The time was 10:17 p. m. Gotch rushed the Pole about the ring after a few seconds of light work about the head. Zbyszko crashed up against the broken post and sprawled through the ropes, but Gotch pulled him back from a bad fall. Fleming ordered them back to ring center and Gotch toppled the Pole over with a bang by tripping.

After six minutes of head-to-head work, Zbyszko went down when Frank gave him the foot, but Gotch experienced difficulty in holding his man down. At the eight-minute mark, Gotch held his man for two minutes, trying to get in a toe hold, but Zbyszko was too strong and jumped to his feet. Gotch made a flying tackle as the Pole tried to tincan out of the danger zone and was on top at the twelve-minute mark, with Zbyszko enmeshed in a half-nelson. For the first time during the evening the Pole got behind the champion by some fast ground work. The Pole fastened his famous wrist hold about Frank's stomach, but the titleholder kicked his way free.

Zbyszko flopped Gotch with a leg hold and was behind again for a brief few seconds, but Gotch turned the tables when he reached down and tried for the toe hold. Gotch kept his man down for seven


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minutes, but Zbyszko was wary and played strictly on the defensive.

Twice the Pole tripped Gotch, but could not hold him. As the men feinted for a hold, Gotch suddenly dived under and grabbed Zbyszko's toe in a wicked grip. He held on tight for a minute and then let go when the Pole kicked him in the ribs. They both jumped to their feet at the same instant and stood glaring at each other.

Gotch began to feint rapidly for the head with his left hand, but the Pole's toe was cruelly hurt and he backed away, at the same time starting to reach down to feel if it was broken. Gotch saw the action and rushed in like a mad bull. He caught Zbyszko in a neutral corner and heaved him to the canvas with a thud. Quicker than a flash, he whipped in a bar arm and wrist lock, and one second later the man from Poland had both his shoulders slammed down on the canvas. The time of the second fall was 27 minutes, 33 seconds.

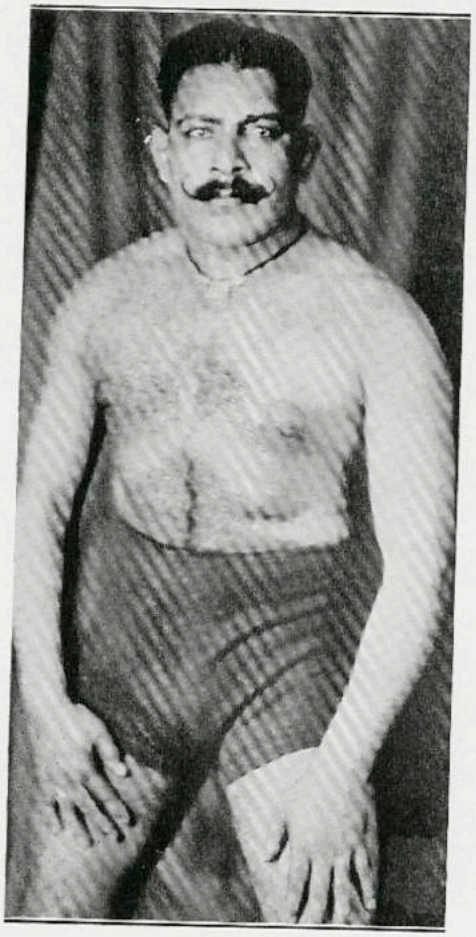
Gotch outpointed his foreign adversary at every point of the game. His speed was too great for the Pole to cope with; his generalship stood out in so pronounced a manner that it made his opponent appear like a novice; his strength was superb, and added to these his offensive and defensive tactics brought him a victory which Zbyszko never had a chance to gain. It was a simple case of one man outclassing another, and that man was Frank Gotch.

Several months later, Frank succumbed to Dan Cupid. The day of this important event was January 11, 1911. The bride was Gladys Oestrich, a home-town friend of Frank's, who was eleven years his junior. In fact, she was so much younger that when Gotch engaged in his first bout, which was with Marshall Green at the Humboldt Opera House, the little girl went to sleep in her father's arms as the contest was being waged. With the remark that they were the happiest pair on record, and that no matter what Frank did she was his partner, we will leave the subject of family matters and return to the professional career of the champion.

Soon after Gotch had returned from his tour of England, another American wrestler, Doctor Roller, under the management of Jack Curley, famous American promoter, paid a flying trip to the continent and engaged in a match with Zbyszko in Vienna, which he had lost. It was shortly after that bout that the Pole came to this country for his American tour, while Curley and Doctor Roller left Europe by way of Liverpool for Montreal, where the Pennsylvania medico was billed for a series of matches under the promotion of George Kennedy.

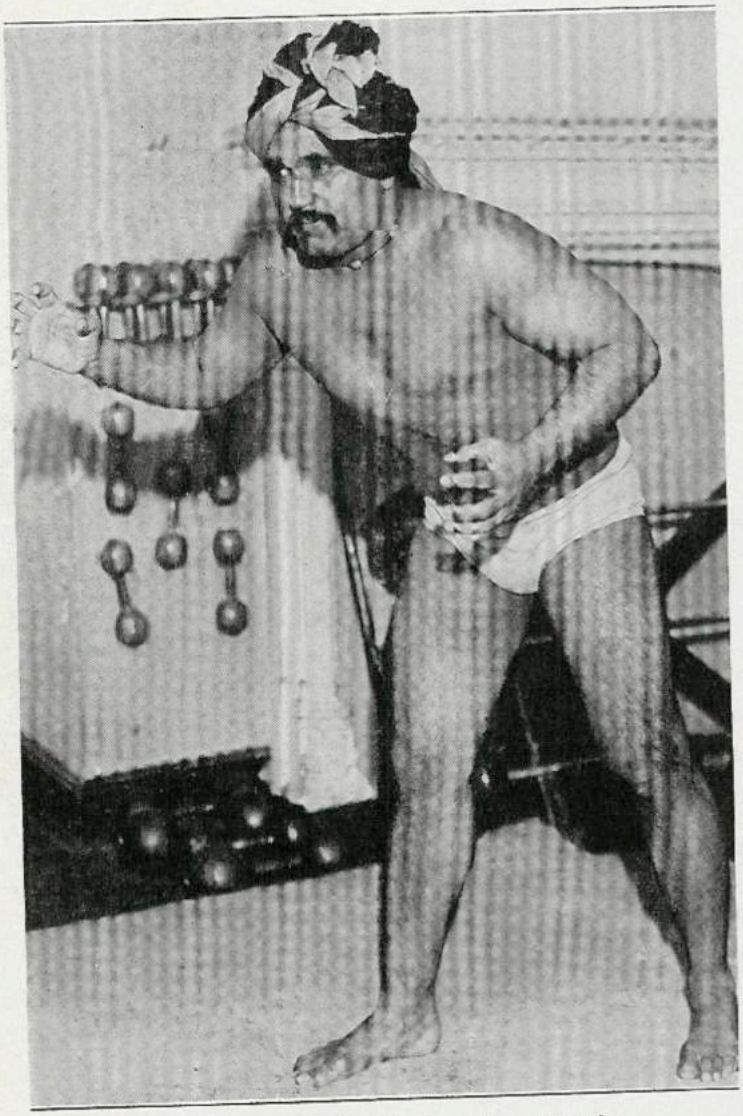
After their arrival in Canada, Curley left Doctor Roller in Montreal, while he proceeded to Chicago, where he at once went to work on a return match between Gotch and Hackenschmidt. While abroad, Curley had seen Hack and, in accord with an agreement he had made with the Russian, he had deposited ten thousand dollars, or half of

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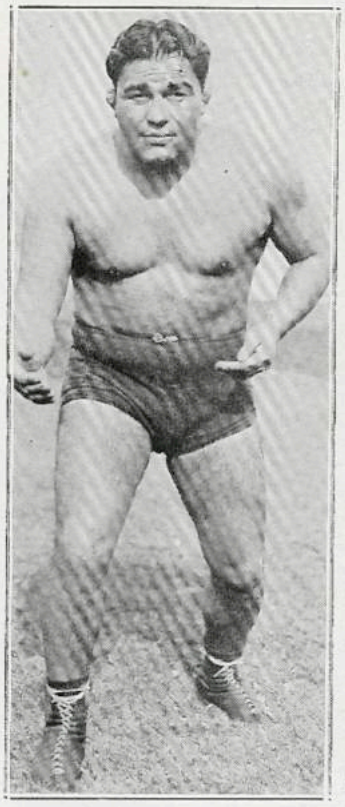
Ghoofar Khan, champion of Afghanistan, who made a good showing in America.

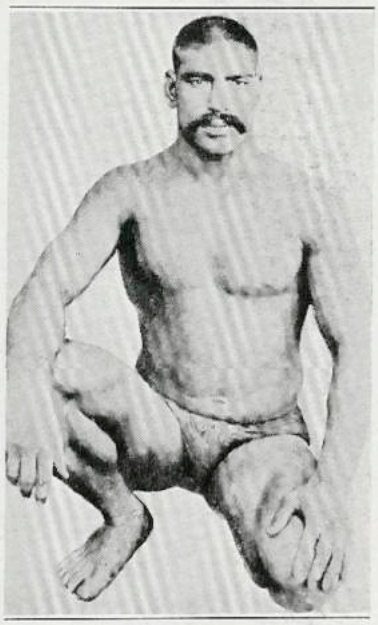

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Jugat Singh, a Hindu who is a clever wrestler.

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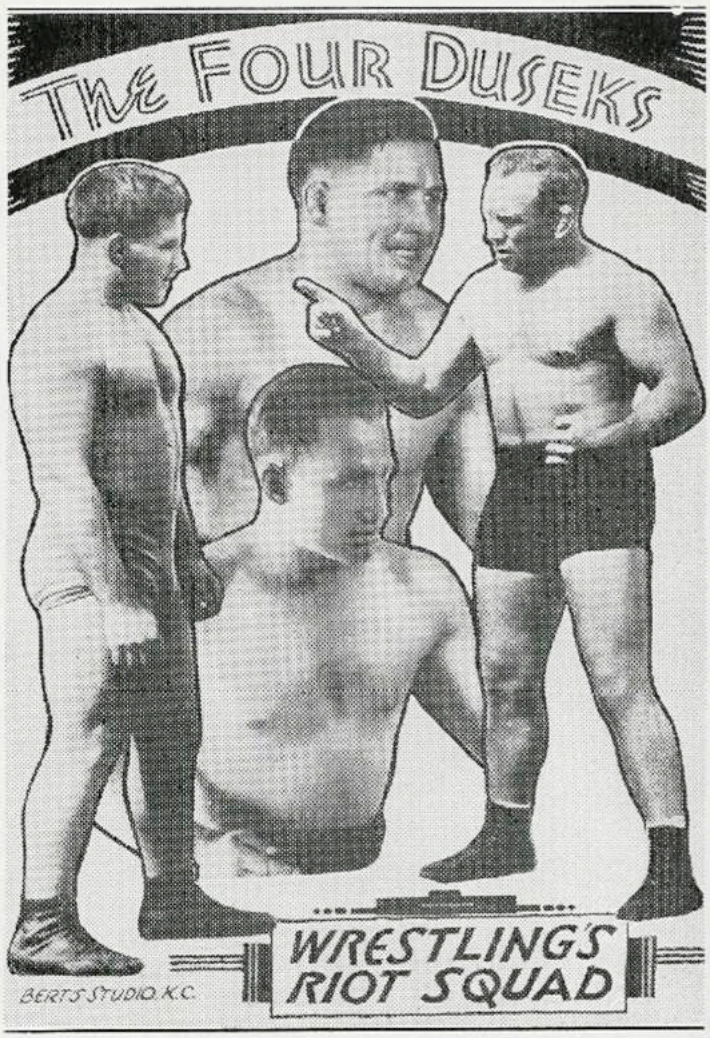


Inman Bux, another good Hindu heavyweight.

Chief Little Wolf, colorful, aggressive heavyweight wrestler—a crowd pleaser. He invented the "Indian death grip."



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The Dusek brothers are the most famed family of wrestlers and rank among the roughest.

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the stipulated price for the tour, with the American Express Company, to be paid to Hackenschmidt on the day he set foot on the boat that was to bring him to America, and the other half to be paid to him in weekly installments during the tour which, Curley hoped, would wind up with a second Gotch-Hack affair.

Hack arrived and the tour began. Montreal, Buffalo, New York, Chicago, Indianapolis, Omaha, Des Moines, Lincoln, Denver. He made all the well-established wrestling centers, with Hack meeting all comers and wrestling on an average of six nights a week.

Meanwhile, the ballyhoo intended to draw Gotch into a second match was on, but Frank announced he had retired and was interested in Yusif Mahmout, who, he professed to believe, would beat Hack. However, Curley worked on him through the newspapers and directly by mail, telegraph and telephone.

Curley knew that one bar to the match was the personal enmity between the men and he hoped to break that down by bringing them together for a quiet talk in which their grievances, real or fancied, might be ironed out. The meeting, after considerable maneuvering on Curley's part, took place at the Raddison Hotel in Minneapolis in March of 1911. Hack and Curley were staying there, and Gotch came on from Humboldt to see them.

However, the personal enmity of Hack for Gotch resulted in an argument that ended the negotiations for a return match.

A few nights after their meeting, Curley and Hackenschmidt were in Omaha, where the Russian was scheduled to meet Henry Ordeman at the Auditorium. As Ordeman had a big following in his home town, the arena was packed with about four thousand persons and among the spectators were four of Gotch's pals, ready to hurt the show by "showing up" Hackenschmidt. They were Farmer Burns, Doc Krone, Emil Klank and Doc Message, and with them was Mahmout, the Bulgarian wrestler.

Following his marriage, Gotch had announced his retirement and declared that henceforth he would handle the affairs of Mahmout, who, he said, was the greatest wrestler in the world, excepting himself, and when Hackenschmidt, through Jack Curley, was seeking a return bout, Gotch informed both that, before he gave his consent, it would be necessary for the Russian first to dispose of Mahmout, which condition, of course, Hackenschmidt refused to accept.

So here was Gotch's chance to belittle Hack by forcing the issue before the crowded Coliseum house. Just before the referee gave his instructions to Hackenschmidt and Ordeman, Farmer Burns mounted the platform and shouted that Hackenschmidt feared Mahmout and refused to give him a chance. He hurled a defi at the Russian to meet the Bulgarian, Hackenschmidt to take all the funds, but the



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management ushered Burns and Mahmout out of the arena and Gotch's ruse failed.

A few weeks later, while Curley and Hackenschmidt were touring in the South, there was a great fire in Chicago, in which many firemen were killed, and Curley wired to the committee in charge of a benefit sports affair that Hackenschmidt would be glad to meet any wrestler for the fund, Gotch preferred. On arriving in Chicago, however, Curley was informed that the committee could not obtain the services of Gotch and that Jess Westergaard, better known as the Big Swede, had been accepted as Hackenschmidt's opponent for a match billed on April 15.

On the day of the match, Gotch, who was a breeder of prize cattle, came on to Chicago to attend the Stock Show and also to watch his arch enemy in action against Westergaard, and Curley decided to take advantage of the situation to force Gotch into accepting terms for another match with the Russian Lion. Finally the two were matched for a finish bout at the White Sox ball park, best two-out-of-three falls, and the largest crowd of modern times that ever witnessed a wrestling match jammed its way into the immense stadium.

Several days before the match, word came from Hackenschmidt's camp that he had sprained his leg, but the "Russian Lion" looked in fit condition when he crawled through the ropes. He was accorded a fitting ovation, but Gotch came in for the lion's share of the applause when he was spied elbowing his way through the infield. Ed Smith of Chicago was the referee.

That there was bitter feeling between the two giants was seen at a glance. Gotch came into the ring with a big smile playing about his mouth and he was all attention to his ringside friends, ignoring his opponent entirely. Hack was peeved over his condition and looked worried when the two were called to the center of the mat for instructions.

Sheer speed in the first ten minutes of the bout defeated Hack. The American was a whirlwind on attack, ready to rough it on the slightest pretext and chattering away at his man like a magpie in an effort to disconcert the "Lion," yet there was no hippodroming. He went to the mat with the "Lion" with the express intention of taking no chances and of crushing him in as decisive a manner as possible.

The first ten minutes' work was lightning fast. Gotch was all over his man, rushing him off the mat a dozen times in his anxiety to get the "Lion" on the ground. Gotch finally threw his man with a thud by a headlong dive between his legs, and then he started to work in earnest for the dreaded toe hold.

He fussed and fumed about Hack's feet and had the Russian nervous and kicking freely. Gotch started to dig one of his powerful arms between Hack's thighs and the Russian was almost rooted off

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the mat. Gotch kept jabbing away and tearing at the "Lion's" legs, keeping his head close down to the Russian's knees.

Suddenly, quicker than a flash, Gotch swung around on his stomach on Hack's immense chest, swinging his legs clear to the front of the "Lion's" head and seizing him in a double body hold about the stomach. Hack was completely mystified at the move, and it only took a few seconds' pressure to jam both of his shoulders to the mat. The first fall was in 14 minutes.

Hackenschmidt was naturally slow, due to his immense muscle development, but he was working smoothly and it looked as though the first fall was hours away when the sudden move of the American changed the complexion of things.

The men were given a fifteen-minute rest, and it was noticeable that the Russian limped lightly when he crawled back through the ropes for the second bout. Gotch was the personification of confidence and laughed openly at Hack as he sat propped up on his stool.

He came out like a mad bull for the second fall and rushed Hack up against the ropes, lifting him up bodily and smashing him to the mat. Gotch immediately began to play for the sore leg, and banged the knee a couple of times with his fist as if seeing if it would stand pressure. Hack wriggled away a few feet, but Gotch followed him up and grabbed his left foot.

For three minutes the two indulged in a battle of brute strength, Gotch trying to get a firm leverage for his thigh between both of Hack's legs and the Russian straining every muscle to break loose. At the six-minute mark Gotch slipped his leg in a trifle closer, and then, with a grim smile, started to press the foot up into the small of the "Lion's" back.

"Don't break my foot," Hack growled as he felt the muscles getting taut in his leg. Gotch had his back to Hack at the time and turned his head to hear what he was saying.

"What?" shouted Gotch at his fallen opponent, at the same time edging in a trifle closer and bending the foot almost to the snapping point.

"Don't break my leg," again appealed the "Russian Lion."

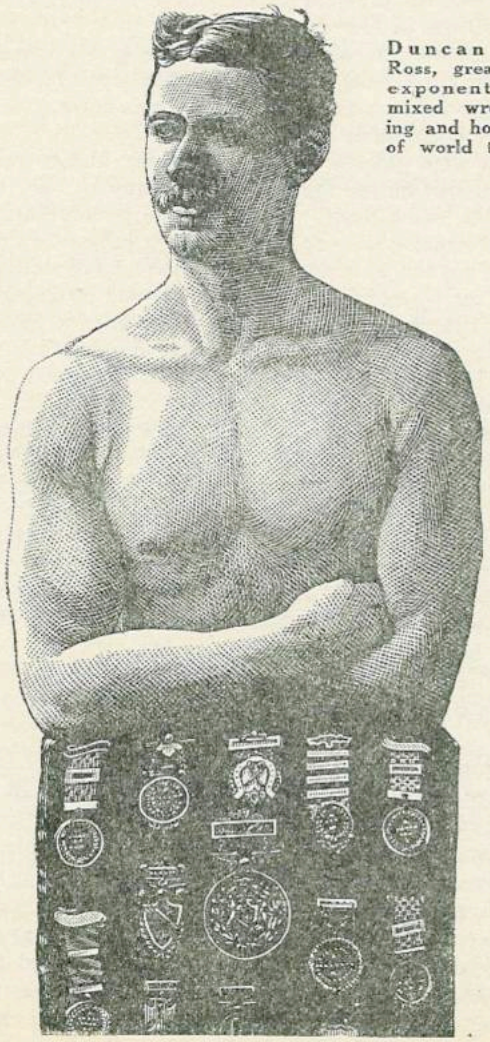
"There will have to be a fall," Referee Ed Smith shouted at this stage, and Hack looked as though he would faint. Great beads of perspiration stood out on his face and he was biting his lips to keep back the groans of agony. Gotch was hanging on like a bulldog in grim death, and every time the Russian moved his body a fraction of an inch, he only followed in closer and jammed in his leg tighter.

Finally, with a sigh, the "Russian Lion" slumped back on the canvas and both shoulders touched the mat. The scene that followed the brilliant victory beggars description. Gotch was carried in tri-



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umph from the ball lot on the shoulders of his admirers, while Hackenschmidt, who only a few minutes before had been idolized, was left—a forgotten hulk—propped up in his corner, attended only by the few handlers who were yelling encouragement to him during the bout.



**Duncan C. Ross, greatest exponent of mixed wrestling and holder of world title.**

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Chapter XIII

# Hackenschmidt Explains

THE defeat of Hackenschmidt by Gotch in their return engagement at Comiskey Park, like the previous one, proved most unsatisfactory, because it was staged under circumstances that prevented the Russian Lion from showing at his best. It will be remembered that, after the contest, Hackenschmidt and his cohorts—including the promoter and close friend of Hack, Jack Curley—announced that the Russian had gone into the ring with a sprained ankle that he had received in training, and as a result, he was unable to stand the strain and had to give in to Gotch.

Of course, there was no doubt at any time about the Hackenschmidt injury, but the contention of Gotch and his followers was that if Hackenschmidt felt that he was unfit to go against the champion, he should never have fooled the American public, who paid eighty-seven thousand dollars to see the match and enabled him to carry off ten thousand dollars as his share of the purse. In an interview following the contest, which drew the largest crowd and the largest gate in American wrestling history, Jack Curley declared that Hackenschmidt didn't want to call off the match nor to have it postponed because of the amount of money which Curley had expended in advance on the program. Hackenschmidt likewise told the public that his suffering from the ankle was beyond description and, were it not for the expense which Jack Curley had spent in promoting the affair, he would not have entered the ring that day.

In 1935, Hackenschmidt, in a series of articles explained in detail the cause of his second defeat. In that article, he told how he insisted that the referee declare all bets off when he had heard that the Gotch camp had learned of his misfortune, and that, when the official refused, Hack informed him that, unless he did as requested, there would be no match. The Russian told the official that he would walk out of the ring, whereupon the referee announced that all wagers were off.

In those articles, the Russian Lion also gave due credit to Jack Curley for the sportsmanship he displayed throughout his dealings with Hackenschmidt. George told the public that he tried repeatedly to get Gotch into the ring with him in London on the occasion of Frank's visit there for a vaudeville engagement, but that there always seemed to be some hitch. According to Hackenschmidt, he placed the obstacle more upon fear than anything else, for he said that extremely high purses were guaranteed the American, but nothing could induce him to accept terms for a return bout in England.

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Almost before he had made his first appearance on the stage in England, Gotch, for the purpose of ballyhoo, issued a statement to the effect that he would be pleased to have some promoter arrange a return bout. "Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be able to vindicate myself in the eyes of the British in this country," was an announcement of Gotch when he reached London.

It didn't take more than twenty-four hours for the negotiations to get under way, so eager were the English to see such a contest. Hackenschmidt started the ball rolling by depositing five hundred dollars as a guarantee of good faith, and a committee of newspapermen was selected to clinch the match, but Gotch simply stalled. He had no intention of giving Hackenschmidt a chance in the land where he had a horde of friends and Frank used the ballyhoo simply for the purpose of aiding his theatrical appearance.

According to Hackenschmidt, after one newspaper had offered an equivalent of ten thousand dollars as a purse, and Oswald Stoll had jumped that to twice the amount. When the National Sporting Club, under whose auspices the match was to have been arranged, sent the rules to Gotch, he crossed out most of them and insisted that he would not accept a bout under such regulations. In the end, Gotch went back to America without the match having taken place. That it finally did materialize was entirely due to the efforts of Curley, under whose management Hackenschmidt had toured America and from whom, said Hackenschmidt, he received constant kindness and unfailing friendship.

In the detailed story of the arrangements, Hackenschmidt declared that Curley promised him ten thousand dollars win, lose or draw, and that the sum would be paid before the Russian Lion entered the ring. "Such generous offer could not be ignored," said Hackenschmidt, "and as I was most anxious for a return bout to prove my superiority to Gotch, I accepted." From this point, we will quote Hackenschmidt in the *Empire News* of London:

"I had known for a long time that Curley was one of the most loyal and generous men I have ever met. Whenever he spoke, sympathy and sincerity just streamed out of him.

"I began at once to prepare for a match which I fully realized must be of vital importance to me, and would certainly determine whether or not I should continue in the profession I had followed for so many years and loved so well.

"That was a happy time for me. I knew instinctively that I could beat Gotch easily, and it was with a joyful heart that I went down to Shoreham, where I then had a bungalow, to get ready for the contest. I had a gymnasium specially built for me, and I got into communication with the best men I could find to assist in my training. They included Wladek Zbyszko, to whom I paid fifty pounds a week and

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all expenses; Jacobus Koch, then in the zenith of his fame; and Dr. Benjamin Roller, himself one of the foremost wrestlers in America.

"All this meant spending a lot of money, and it may serve to show my readers how much expenses claim out of the large fees wrestlers sometimes receive if I say that my preparations for the second Gotch match must have cost me at least a thousand pounds.

"In all my long career I never prepared myself more conscientiously than I did for this return encounter. In the morning I went out on to the glorious Sussex downs for hard road work with a little sprinting and, on getting home, I wrestled Zbyszko, Dr. Roller and Koch, one after the other.

"Gradually I achieved that perfect poise and balance of all my qualities and attributes which is known only to the athlete in perfect trim—a state for which I cannot find the exact, only word.

"When the time for my appearance in Chicago was drawing near, Curley and Dr. Roller went over first, the arrangement being that I should follow with Koch as my companion and attendant. By that time I was in wonderful, magnificent condition. When I arrived in Chicago, I found that Curley had not only secured for me quarters that were almost ideal, he had actually had a gymnasium specially added to them for my exclusive use. I still think of the good night's rest I had there on my arrival. How different it would have been had I known that, although there was still a fortnight to wait for the match, I was actually going to lose it the very next day! That within twenty-four hours I should know the end of my wrestling career!

"After breakfast on the following morning, I prepared myself, quietly and comfortably, to go to the gymnasium for my day's work. First of all, I wrestled Americus, who had come from Baltimore to assist in my preparation.

"As I have said before, Americus was one of the very toughest men any wrestler could wish to meet. I am sure I am not far wrong if I say he was very little, if at all, inferior to Gotch himself.

"In my training, no matter who was against me, I always meant business, and the moment we had shaken hands, Americus and I were at it for all we were worth. In less than two minutes, he was on his back. I don't think any man in the world has ever been more astonished than he was!

"I immediately took on the second man—Dr. Roller. He was down and out in seven minutes! Almost without pausing, I got to grips with Koch, who occupied me no longer than the doctor had done.

"Then Roller said to me: 'George, you have done enough for today. Don't do any more.' I replied: 'Roller, come and let us have another try. I am going down to the knees. You try to hold me down. Don't let me get up.' Down I went, and the doctor got into the position I desired. In a second I was on my legs again and free.



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"'Let's do it once more,' I said, and down I went again, with the doctor behind me. I jumped up to try to free myself, and this time he did not try to hold me. He went up with me. As we got on our legs, his right foot struck my right knee.

"I heard three distinct little pops, like small corks being drawn, and I dropped to the floor, to lie there like a log. And there I had to remain for nearly six hours.

"My friends could do nothing for me. In order to keep the mishap a secret, the only thing we could do was to stay in the gymnasium until night fell. Then they lifted me up, they put a long cloak belonging to Americus around me, and, when it was dark, two of them practically carried me home. I was hanging between them from their shoulders. They put me straight to bed.

"In the morning they took me to a surgeon—the one, I believe, who abstracted the bullet which killed President McKinley. He examined my knee, he X-rayed it, he bandaged it, and I was taken home again.

"The doctor visited me daily—sometimes he came twice a day—but my knee was dreadfully swollen. I had to put it into water almost too hot to bear, it was massaged, and every day it was bandaged, bound up, that is, with sticking plaster.

"But I felt I could not, must not, give up without a struggle. That much, at least, I owed to Jack Curley and to myself.

"So I faced newspapermen, I was photographed again and again, without any of my visitors suspecting what a state I was in, although my knee was so tightly bound that it was almost impossible for me to bend it.

"Not until the match was only a few days off did I venture into the gymnasium again. I wanted to make myself absolutely sure as to the condition of my knee. I asked Americus to go down on his knees.

"The moment I put any strain upon the knee, it was seized by pain a thousand times worse than toothache. It was hopeless. I got up and went back to my quarters.

"It was on the very day before the match that I found out what a really wonderful and great man Jack Curley was. He said: 'George, let us go for a drive.' We drove to a German beer garden, where we sat down.

"Remember that, in cash, Curley had more at stake in the match than either Gotch or myself. Then try to judge how my sympathy overflowed towards him when he actually advised me not to go on with it!

"'George, do as you like,' he said, 'but this means a lot to you. You have been put to a great deal of expense. One never knows what might happen if you get all right again. Even if you couldn't meet

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Gotch, you might meet another man and prove yourself as good as ever.

" 'I don't wish to influence you in any way, but if you don't think it right to go on with the match, don't do it. Whatever you decide, my opinion of you will always be just the same.'

"All these things, with recollections of the man's unfailing kindness to me, his unhesitating belief in me as a wrestler, passed through my mind before I answered.

"Perhaps I gave the wrong reply. Perhaps I ought to have tried to avoid defeat by saying: 'Call it off.'

"The morning of the second encounter with Gotch, I was attended to by all my friends and helpers. Four lengths of sticking plaster were stretched all along my leg from almost the hip to the ankle. Four lengths of sticking plaster were stretched crosswise. The knee joint was then bound in twenty feet of rubber bandage, three inches wide. I had intended to wrestle barelegged, but I could not reveal my state to my opponent and the public, so I put on a pair of long, green drawers which Dr. Roller lent me. So far as I knew, not a whisper of my accident had reached the Gotch crowd.

"In that state I arrived at the dressing room and waited for the signal to enter the ring. What my thoughts were then I can hardly tell you, but I know they dwelt for a long time upon Jack Curley.

"Suddenly the door opened, and Jack came in. He said, 'George, according to our contract, I have to pay you your money beforehand, and here it is.' He handed me a great wad of notes, which I passed to Koch to hold for me.

"Koch said, 'George, you have no right to go on. I can't take the money. I refuse to do so. You must postpone the match until another time.'

"But there was not a voice within me that would have persuaded me to withdraw and let Curley down. So I handed the money back to Curley and asked him to give it to me after the match was over.

"Then someone came and whispered to me that the Gotch crowd knew all about my condition, and that they and their friends were betting heavily to make easy money. This was very unpleasant to me.

"The signal came. I went toward the ring, hiding my condition as well as I could. I stepped on to a chair, and then pulled my damaged limb on to the platform after me. It was quite a job to climb into the ring. Then I sat down in my corner, with Gotch in his, and the referee in the center.

"Next I stood up and said to the referee, 'Please call all the bets off.' The referee refused to do so. I said, 'If you don't do it, I walk out of the ring.' When he saw that I was determined, he did as I wished.

"Then I gave Gotch his satisfaction. I don't think there is much

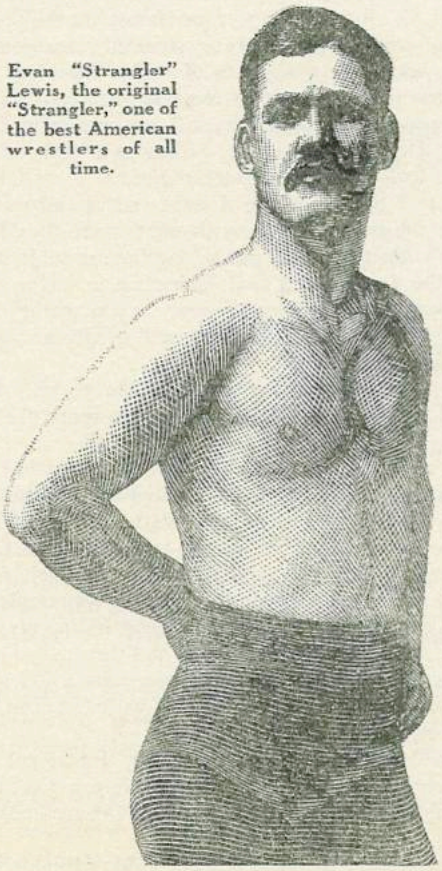


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to be said about the wrestling. I stood on one foot and we got to grips.

"Even then, crippled though I was, he could not get me down to the knees by himself. But my state was such that I could only end the whole dreary business myself. I went down twice, but not as the result of any effort by Frank Gotch, though I tried not to let the people see what was happening. I lost two falls, and went back to my dressing room."

Thus we have Hackenschmidt's own story of how he lost the match.



**Evan "Strangler" Lewis, the original "Strangler," one of the best American wrestlers of all time.**

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Chapter XIV

# Referee Smith's Story

IN view of the statements by Frank Gotch and George Hackenschmidt, the authors decided to get some first hand information on the famous bout of this pair direct from the referee, Edward W. Smith. Mr. Smith, who was a Chicago Sports Editor and an official of boxing and wrestling events in Chicago, a few months before his death early in 1936, wrote an article for *The Ring* magazine, in which he analyzed the much discussed contest that made U. S. mat history. His interesting article follows:

It was that peaceful hour at the close of an athletic day—a well-ordered day in the life of a great gladiator. The glaring sun had cooled a bit around five o'clock and the calm of tranquility, if not actual content, had settled down upon the somewhat glorified head of George Hackenschmidt, known as the "Russian Lion," and his mates.

There was a little bunch sprawled about in a corner of the spacious lawn that fronted the living quarters of the great athlete up on the North Shore of Chicago this splendid August evening twenty-two years ago. That delightful lassitude that follows hard work well done and just preceding the well-contrived evening meal.

These folks were quiet, languidly so, and beyond an occasional grunt of good-nature and a slow change of lounging position, only the distant hum of a huge city was in the air.

Suddenly Johann Koch, mammoth German trainer of the mighty Hack, roused himself and let out a sharp gasp. Pointing across the street he had everybody's attention in a twinkle.

"Yah, yah!" he called loudly, "das ist, das ist, AN AMERICAN CATCH-AS-CATCH-CAN WRESTLER!"

And even the placidly phlegmatic Hack himself had to let out a long guffaw. The good Herr Koch was pointing excitedly at an almost helpless paralytic of a man painfully struggling along the sidewalk, arms and legs twisting into agonizing-looking knots as he shuffled by!

That little incident, happening just a few days before the second wrestling match between Hackenschmidt and Frank Gotch for the world's title, illustrates better than anything I could cite, the hideous fear felt by foreign wrestlers of the toe hold, the greatest bugaboo of all time in any line of athletic endeavor.

It was the first thing the European wrestler heard of, this Gordian thing they called in America, "the toe hold." And Frank Gotch was the fee-fo-fum man who wielded this tocsin, this hobgoblin, this fiery cross, this toe hold that devastated and destroyed men's usefulness,




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that tortured the strongest and paralyzed the very souls of the gamest.

It was dinned into the cauliflower ears of the invaders as soon as an American tour was suggested. In various languages, by speech and gesture, this yellow flag was waved before the terrified eyes of the athlete—and in the telling, nothing was lost, nothing that would add to the coming menace was forgotten. It got to be part of the managerial ritual, this recitation of the terrible things that had happened to men who deliberately had made themselves victims of this American juggernaut.

If it might be that one or two of the Europeans hadn't been warned of the awfulness of what he was up against, he heard about it with all its ramifications as soon as his feet touched an American dock and the purpose of his visit to this country was learned.

Sport writers took delight in telling these innocent looking and trustful strangers of the many things that might happen, of many things that didn't happen, stretching their imaginations to the bursting point just to see the popeyed terror into which the recitations threw the newcomers. Most of these yarns were sheer figments of lively novelistic brains for, be it known, all stories to the contrary notwithstanding, Frank Gotch never won an important match in his entire career by use of the toe hold.

Gotch used it merely as a feint to get an opponent's legs apart. For Gotch's favorite grip, and the one with which he was most deadly, was the old crotch and half nelson. In order to get a brawny arm up through a man's legs and well into his crotch, he first had to get those legs separated. He generally could do this by FEINTING to get a "toe hold."

It is preposterous to think that Gotch INVENTED the "toe hold," as hundreds upon thousands of wrestling fans and readers of newspapers and magazines have been led to suppose. A grip on the foot or the ankle or merely on the toes is as old as catch-as-catch-can itself. Far, far back in the Bill Muldoon and Clarence Whistler days —and that's far, far back—there was knowledge that such grips were good for bluffing or feinting purposes. I have wood cut illustrations in my possession showing the toe hold used in Egypt 2,000 years ago.

Hence we must conclude that the smart Mr. Gotch, seeing in this toe hold business, suggested to him, he once told me, in a somewhat accidental manner, an excellent commercial proposition, quickly encouraged the idea that it was his chief stock in trade. And it proved a tremendous asset for the handsome young blade from Humboldt, Iowa, and he and his smart handlers played it to the limit.

Constant reference to the "toe hold" and its horrible results, made of Frank Gotch a sort of brute, a type of relentless killer who delighted to the *nth* degree in mayhem and other little ring pleasantries

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like breaking ankles, twisting knees into pulp, squeezing 'em until they yelled bloody murder, while he chuckled in high glee as he gloated over their misery.

Why, women kept their little children in the house when this "awful being" was in town, trembling in fear until their husbands were safely home after the day's labor. One could never tell where he might seize on his victims.

And Gotch let them think what they pleased. He was a mighty box-office draw. There was a glamour about him that made for huge crowds willing to pay top prices to watch him perform. If he didn't break somebody's leg this time, they went to see the next show in the hopes that he wouldn't be so thoughtless. Like Jack Dempsey in boxing, Gotch was the gate magnet in wrestling.

Indeed, the "toe hold" was a tremendous asset for Frank Gotch. So likewise was the "headlock" for Strangler Ed Lewis, just as was the "strangle hold" for ol' Evan Lewis, the original "Strangler" from Beloit, Wis. Joe Stecher had his "body scissors," a clamp as old as the hills, but he drew it out of an ancient bag of tricks, polished it up, and cashed in heavily.

It takes things like that in the wrestling game to give that touch of finality to a performer. He must be distinctive in this day and age of specialists. He must pack a supposedly new trick and make it sparkle with color like the front of a modernistic drug store.

Look what Gus Sonnenberg did with his "flying tackle"! And Everette Marshall with his "airplane spin," and Joe Savoldi with this and that, and all the rest of them with their endless specialties. Jim Browning splashed in at the fag end of the present era with a new variation of a scissors and made something of himself. Old stuff but made bright and new with the sapolio of a faddish decade that demands and will fall for a good selling point!

Poof with lack of originality! Make 'em think it's new and you got 'em!—that is the motto of our modern wrestling stars.

Now with this somewhat lengthy preamble and getting back to the Hackenschmidt business, we'll say that the Americans, and Frank Albert Gotch in particular, had all the best of the foreigners to begin with because of the catch-as-catch-can style of wrestling. The big chaps on the other side of the big pond had for ages known little or nothing but the Graeco-Roman style of wrestling.

They got their grips strictly above the waistline, their rules forbidding things like fantastic dives into the legs and such. They had their hammerlocks, their nelsons, their waist locks, grips upon the arm, and let it go at that. With their technique and routine thus limited, it was but natural that the European matches between good men took much longer in the settlement and perhaps were a bit



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stupid, lacking, as they undoubtedly did, the sparkle and the dash and the entire unconventionality of the American contests.

Over here there was no restraint—less by far today than there was twenty-two years ago when that famous, or shall we say notorious, Chicago match was decided so flatly. On this side there is nothing at all to cramp a man's style, no limit to what he may do. Today a top-hole match, one of the supposedly high order or first-class, takes on all the aplomb of a street turn-up or a free-for-all. Only this restriction —and even sometimes this rule is disregarded—the present day matches are private as far as the two contestants are concerned. That is to say strangers are not supposed to join in. Otherwise everything goes, everything and anything, especially good it is if a bit new, like the fellow who planted carpet tacks in his trunks the other night.

Talk about putting teeth in the law! Carpet tacks is biting off a whole mouthful! And I'm wondering what the late Bill Muldoon secretly thought of it all, Bill and his somewhat lofty ideals! And what if a Frank Albert Gotch of 1911 could come back today, sound in wind and limb? I'm wondering!

But we digress a bit. So, getting back to that little *safari* that George Hackenschmidt made into this country twenty-two years ago last September, we'll try to give you all of the facts as we saw them, facts and fancies and opinions and side thoughts, a general glossary, as it were, of the combats, two in all, between the greatest American and the greatest European—maybe not the actual greatest in a wrestling way but we'll sum it up differently by speaking of them as *The Best-Publicized*. Gotch for his undoubted excellence as a wrestler—and the "toe hold"; Hackenschmidt for his admitted wrestling ability, uncanny strength, and a degree of SHOWMANSHIP unsurpassed. Now go on with the story.

These giants, vastly different in every way, met twice.

The first was in Dexter Park Pavilion on April 3, 1908, and was promoted by W. W. Wittig, a theatrical man from, I think, Minneapolis. A clever gentleman in his way who was attracted to the sporting end of the show business for two reasons—an altruistic desire to see this big wrestling question settled, and to make money with a show handled on an entirely different plane from the old orthodox, which at that time was a bit scraggly, mangy, and rather unfit for so-called decent folks.

It was the Wittig idea to scale his house high. It is a huge structure, down in the Stock Yards district and now known as the International Pavilion. So he charged as high as $40 for some of his seats, catering distinctly to society people and the well-to-doers. It is supposed that he had around $60,000 in the house, but he never gave out any official figures. Anyway there was a big mob there.

It went along for two hours and three minutes, and at the end of

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that time, Hackenschmidt, wasted away to the point of exhaustion, indicated to the referee, who was me, that he wished to concede the first fall to Mr. Gotch. Accordingly this sensational announcement was made, and the men retired to their dressing rooms.

At the end of a fifteen-minute rest, I went to Hack's room and told him we were ready to continue. He waved me aside with scornful gesture, indicating that he wished no further traffic with Mr. Gotch, at least not that evening—perhaps, he said, at some future time.

Later I heard that he claimed that Gotch had kept poking him in the eye with his thumbs, and had kept putting jiujitsu pressures to his head at the nerve centers and had used other low-down tactics of a vulgar nature, and had rubbed oil of wintergreen into his skin. Having at that time an idea that wrestling was not classable as strictly a parlor game, an impression that has been remarkably strengthened since seeing some of the 1935 versions, I perhaps did overlook those little things that were so annoying to the mighty "Lion."

But down deep in my own mind, I decided that George Hackenschmidt had quit—quit quite cold, as a matter of fact—because there was nothing about Gotch's treatment of him in that first encounter that could by any stretch of imagination call for a disqualification. There was some face-mauling, just as there always is—today it is out-and-out slugging—but at no time did the vaunted Hackenschmidt ever make a serious move towards slapping down his opponent, never showed much in the wrestling line during the entire two hours.

Later also, Hack claimed that he had taken Gotch too lightly and that he had neglected to train seriously—indeed, had done little in that line other than a few walks and a bit of limbering up in the gymnasiums. Social obligations being what they were at the time, George forgot his chief obligation to the public at large which was paying grand opera prices to see him in good condition and fit to tackle three or four Gotches, one after the other. Plenty of mighty athletes have forgotten just that thing. I've always thought they should be sued for it—isn't it obtaining money under false pretenses or have you ever thought of it that way, in that light?

Well, anyway, plenty of good people who paid to see George that evening many years ago agreed that the "Russian Lion" had a world of color, but unfortunately most of them designated the shade as something of a saffron, even going farther, some of the more vulgar, to say that it was a quite positive hue of yellow, out and out. Again I say, that as the referee of that match, I thought that the "Russian Lion" quit.

The whole thing was laughed off finally, just as those things always are, even though people are always annoyed at being bunked. Yet they'll go back for more and more, time after time. At any rate



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the Gotch lad, then approaching the thirtieth milestone of his life, was accepted as an outright good champion and Hack, back in his dear old Lunnon, was temporarily forgotten.

In between times, there came a steady stream of foreign invaders, all pointed for that great annual shot at Gotch and the ever-present fat gate receipts. Once a year Frank gave the most likely of the mob a shot in a big way—usually in Chicago where the crafty and entirely capable Joe Coffey was promoting along with Izzy Herk of the Empire Theatre, with Jack Curley cutting in only occasionally and little Silvy Ferretti flitting in and out.

Jack Herman brought over the mighty Stanislaus Zbyszko to be followed by his younger brother, Vladek, who still is wrestling. Antoine Pierre, once a great Greek wrestler himself in a day much farther back, dug up Yussiff Mahmout, by far the best of the Turks or Bulgarians and many think, including myself, the best of the whole European delegation. Both were taken on and beaten by Gotch.

Also came other mighty men in this futile chase for the title and this ignis fatuus of a Gotch. And month after month, business zoomed for the Iowa farmer, still a farmer at heart and tilling this fertile soil of the public's desire to see his athletic wares and do him homage in true hero-worship fashion.

Dear ol' John Fan had no neuritis when it came to paying out. There came, with lesser or greater flare of the publicity trumpet, such men as Raicevitch, a good 'un but a final disappointment; George Lurich, another Russian who didn't click the way George did; John Lemm, a corking good Swiss but a bit too small to class up with the bigger cheeses; Jim Essen, a giant but insufficient Scotsman; Con O'Kelly, a rollicking Mick who could fight as well and later sent his son to the land of promise, also as a fighter; Frisensky, a handsome Norsk who didn't get far; Cazeau, a fiery Italian; and the eminently pulchritudinous Constant Le Marin, a Frencher, imported with several others by George Kennedy, the French-Canadian who did a lot of promoting in the province of Quebec.

Also scattered around in the general confusion, scattered, too, by minor Americans who fell far short of any Gotchian classification, were a number of good second-class Italians and Greeks and to add to the general gaiety the irrepressible Benjamin hopped into the flutter with a couple of Hindoos and then East Indians. The list is compiled haphazardly from vagrant memory.

Strange filiations, surely, most of them, but "them were the happy days" for there were few economic embarrassments anywhere. The foreigners were frugal, lived cheaply, worked often if not always at a big wage, and everybody seemed happy.

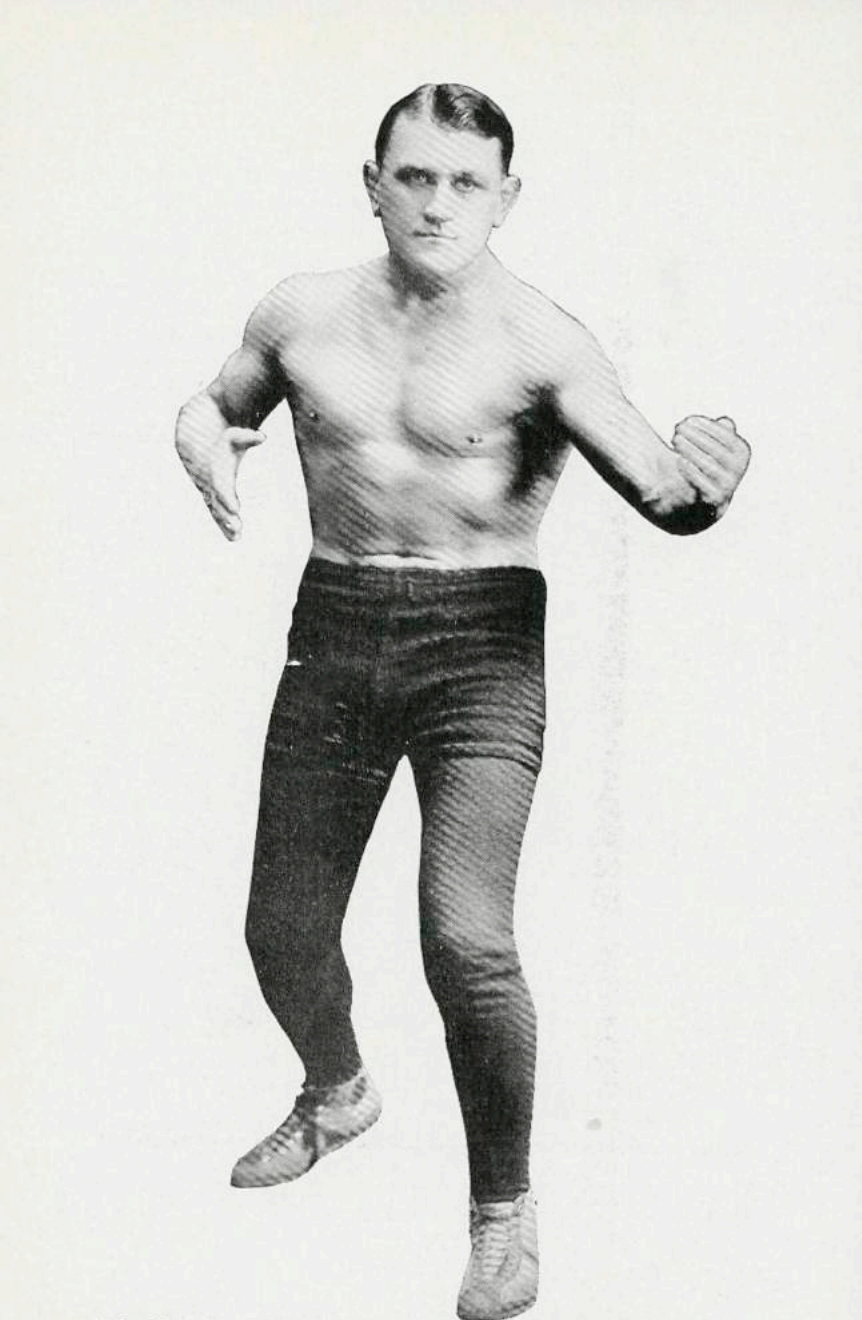
Meanwhile that hip-hippity, hair-trigger brain of the inimitable Curley was buzzing. It always was and probably always will, but,

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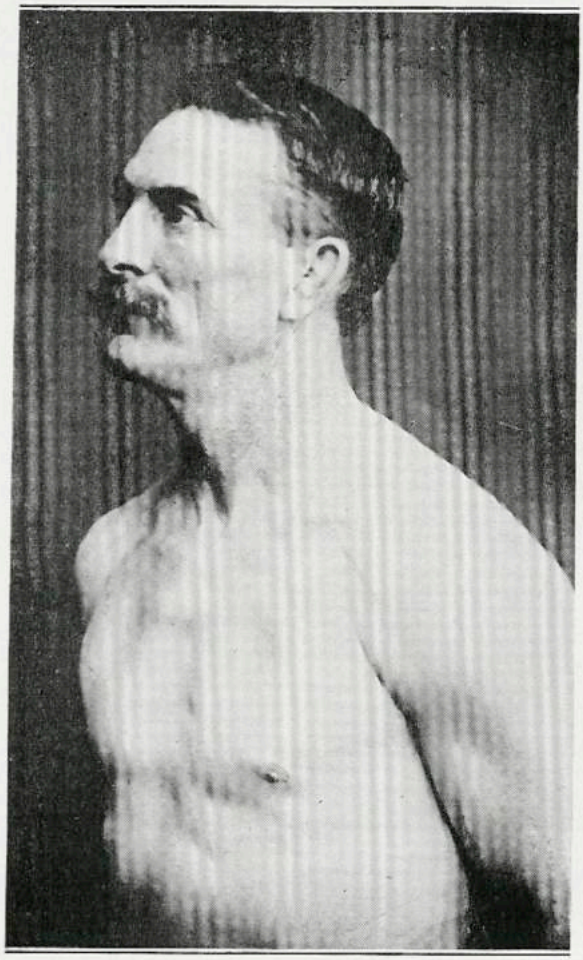
Ferenc Holuban, whose tour of the United States was a successful one.


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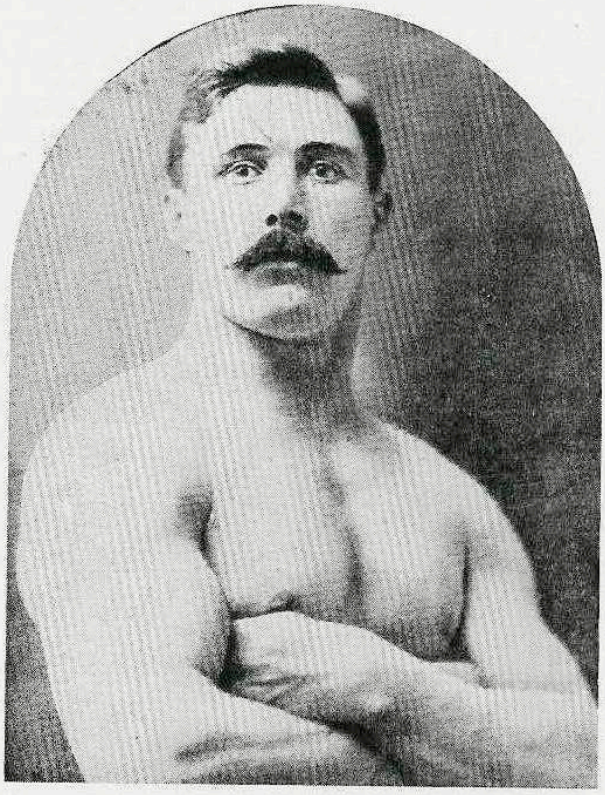
John Pesek, the Nebraska Tiger Man, veteran of many thrilling contests.

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Farmer Burns, who taught Frank Gotch the tricks of the wrestling trade.


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Tom Jenkins, one of America's greatest wrestlers who after retirement, became the coach at West Point.

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since Hack's unhappy night at Dexter Pavilion back in 1908, Jack nursed an overpowering idea among dozens upon dozens of other ideas of lesser import. He went to England, talked with George, and found the "Lion" in a receptive mood.

So it was in the early spring of 1911 that the seed was planted and, lo and behold! it blossomed in no time at all. Gotch was in a right mood, too, for the second meeting, and it was signed up with little or no flubdub for the following Labor Day, Comiskey Park, where the White Sox ball club plays, to be the scene, and the minor details rolling along with speed and a precision that was amazing.

Biggest detail of all? Well, you guessed it first time—the financial arrangements!

Much wrestling guff has flowed under the bridge since that Labor Day of twenty-two years ago, many a hold broken, many an ear wrecked, many a new foul trick invented or devised and approved into the new code, yet the old world goes on just the same as it did when Bill Muldoon, Joe Acton, Clarence Whistler, Duncan C. Ross, Andre Cristol, Bobby Miller and Tom Cannon were tumbling around and arguing over titles and financial terms, more especially the latter.

But of all the financial terms ever devised, this second Gotch-Hack match took all of the berries and the cakes and the cookies that ever were heard of. And we'll have to tell you about it, as far as we can remember with some degree of accuracy, before proceeding further with other details.

Everybody had a different idea and everybody, through his own judgment, got the worst of the melon-cutting, for that's what it proved to be. Did I say everybody? I'm wrong. It should have read "everybody but Jack Curley"—as usual, you may add, but I've known of cases that weren't so good for Jack. Anyway, here's the way I remember it.

The smart Mr. Gotch and the far wiser Mr. Emil Klank, then with plenty to say in the champion's affairs, decided they didn't like the prospects and therefore would ask a price that would knock the four promoters a twister, all four of 'em. They wanted a flat of $20,000 and a mere trifle of one grand for training expenses. Further, as a sort of afterthought, they would like to have $15,000 of the amount paid in hand.

No, they wouldn't ask any percentage—just the flat was what they were after.

To their vast amazement their offer was accepted immediately by Curley, and the money was put up in escrow with Gotch's personal banker in Humboldt!

And did those farmer boys leave Chicago to go back home in a merry mood! It was the old story of the country chap being tickled pink when he gets the best of the city smarty in any sort of a deal.



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And did they get the best of it? Why, boy, the match was lucky if it drew $21,000, let alone leave anything for Hack and the promoters! City slickers outslicked, b'gosh!

But they didn't get nearly what they would have been entitled to had they had more faith in their own game and their own drawing powers. The house ran nearly $90,000 and they could easily have gotten a privilege of thirty-five per cent of it. They simply outsmarted themselves to the tune of about $12,000!

So when it came to Hack's end of it, the promoters did a lot of figuring. They saw the match would cost them, including Gotch's dough, a total of about $25,000. So when they figured with Hack, they said they would take that right "off the top" and give him seventy per cent of everything that came in after the first twenty-five G's. Hack figured awhile and finally accepted.

The picture money, perhaps good, perhaps bad, perhaps none at all, was split fifty per cent to Gotch and twenty-five per cent each to Hack and the club.

Hack got thinking it over and started to squawk, mildly at first and then quite brashly. Supposing it rains that day, he said; there wouldn't be anybody there. It's liable to be too cold, too, out in the open air. Any one of a dozen different things might happen to ruin his chances of getting even small pay for his services.

Curley, acting as Hack's manager as well as joint promoter, listened patiently. Then he did a lot of figuring. He'd gamble, same as he always did. Of course he'd like a sure thing, but that's never possible—he'd been around too many race tracks to ever think there was such a thing.

"All right, George, how much do you want for your end? I'll buy you out," was the gist of Curley's mental round-up of all the loose ends of the controversy. George said he would take $15,000 but this was finally whittled down to $13,500 and Hack, thinking craftily that he too, like Gotch, had made a mighty sharp bargain, went about singing in the bathtub and otherwise making his training staff feel good. Curley signed this side agreement and all was well.

Well, figure it out for yourself. Under the original agreement Hack's end would have been seventy per cent of $62,000 or over $44,000. As it was Curley paid him $13,500 and had left the neat little profit of $29,937 for himself!

Talk about your high finance! And farmer boys' figuring and the craftiness of the frugal European! And Curley, the gambler, wound up with all the dough! One time at least when the big gamble turned out all right! The club's profit was $18,616.

High finance that was low stuff for the farmers and Hack!

No wonder Hackenschmidt went back to England and was never heard of again.

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For the matter of that, it was about the last major performance that Gotch made, too. He wrestled, it is true, but it wasn't long after that that the insidious, incurable disease that brought about his end became apparent.

As far as the second match was concerned, there is little to tell—that is in a wrestling way, for it already has been well told by Nat Fleischer in *The Ring*. That shell of a man who appeared that afternoon at the ball park in an effort to snatch the crown wasn't even a tough opponent. He was flopped twice in a hurry, the first fall coming in 14:18 and the second, a miserable exhibition on Hack's part, winding up amid a storm of disgusted boos and catcalls and a final shower of those well-known Bronx cheers in 5:32.

They've always thought, those chaps back in the hinterlands and in the yesteryears, that George Hackenschmidt wasn't a game feller, that he just had a lot of formidable-looking muscles upholstering a bum heart that wouldn't stand the stress. In the manner of speaking, George simply couldn't take it.

Turfmen would say simply that he was a front runner, a "morning glory," and would falter when the competition got a bit to the stiff side. The old ticker ticked all right in calm weather; when the sea got stormy and the track sloppy, that ticker didn't function, wouldn't respond to the extra exertion or, we might say, any surtax.

The Greeks have a word for it, too. You guess what it is.

There was a striking difference in these two men. In build they were sharply unlike, in fact one might call them totally dissimilar. This included mentality, ideas, construction, experience, temperament, all else, including habits. It has been said that Gotch typified exactly what an artist would seek to portray on his canvas in bringing into one figure the composite virility of America. He was the six-foot representative of that sort of development supposed to be indigenous to American soil and more particularly that part of the soil lying west of Old Man River. He was of the well-rounded type with no one set of muscles developed to any marked degree. He had the short, sharp action of a man fifty pounds lighter and the ability to carry his speed over a distance of ground.

Gotch could tear and rip and batter at every portion of a man's anatomy without apparent pause. He was built both physically and mentally to stand the most severe of strains. At the same time he forced the other fellow to stand it along with him or collapse.

This American was brought up in a rough and ready, decidedly tricky and conscienceless school of workmen in this peculiar game of wrestling. The first good man to uncover him out in the playgrounds of that home of wrestlers, was Dan McLeod, a little chap of seldom over 165 pounds but who handled big fellows with much the ease that big fellows are supposed to handle little ones. McLeod beat him



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but was much impressed with the big, green, gawky hulk of a farmer boy. He told Martin ("Farmer") Burns about him, and Burns, snooping around, discovered that Dan hadn't told him half the story.

And Gotch couldn't have had a better teacher than Burns, in all of the little tricks, artifices, and complexities of the sport as practiced in all of the detours and crossroads of the Middle West at that time, or about the start of the present century. There was skullduggery abroad in the land those days, and trickery had full sway. The public, just naturally shied away. Ol' John Public had found too many aces buried in the hole.

Such was the foundation of Gotch's mat learning. It was a similar structure to that attained by all of the farmer wrestlers of the early 1900's.

Hackenschmidt, then idol of the Old World, typified the physical germination of his section of the globe. His was the Atlaslike shape, the later-day verification of the ancient conception of the colossal figure with the globe resting on the back of his brawny neck. He was short and stocky with vast shoulders and a marvelous mass of muscles playing everywhere from under his wonderful arms down all the way to his very ankles.

Long a stage performer, he necessarily toyed a lot with weights, bar bells being his especial hobby. Therefore he was a combination wrestler and weight-lifter. His sheer strength was something awesome to contemplate. On that alone he should have been able to pick Gotch up and fairly break him into bits. But Gotch, strictly the wrestler, proved the utter fallacy of the once general idea that an abundance of tremendously developed muscles have more than a passing part in the drama of wrestling championships. He proved that well developed POWER backed by instinctive CO-ORDINATION and a normally balanced, sober-centered nerve force can turn the trick.

The mat routine of these men differed vastly. Hack, used to the old Graeco-Roman style of working, would set out methodically to attack one certain supposedly weak spot in an antagonist's anatomy. Were it the left leg, the right arm, the neck or a shoulder, Hack picked his spot and thereafter called that shot to the exclusion of all others. To compel a garrison into surrender, he figured the best way was to batter down some one portion of the wall. That was his general idea and he carried it with a strange blending of Graeco-Roman and catch-as-catch-can.

The Gotch idea was totally different, he having been brought up in a different school and under circumstances altogether at variance, as already pointed out. From Farmer Burns he learned that all important matter of leverage, which has to do, as you may know, with something like the center of gravity. And, let me add right here, it

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is all important—the whole bulwark of a solid and complete knowledge of wrestling.

In a few words, the idea is to keep the other fellow constantly out of plumb. Never let him get set. It is the something that few of the spectators, even those in the most forward rows of seats, are able to grasp unless they actually have inside knowledge of what is going on.

Gotch never was a fancy wrestler. On the contrary, he at times was spoken of as being more than a little clumsy. This was because he constantly had in mind the main idea—winning the match in hand. He didn't think of the pictures. He was striving to get results and through what has aptly been termed "timing"—a sort of measured beat, a syncopation rhythm, the absolute culmination of the right move at exactly the right moment, not the bat of an eyelash too soon, not a flash too late.

There wasn't a thing that could be construed as ladylike about the Gotch feller. When he grabbed, he grabbed for keeps. When he jerked it was a whole-hearted gesture that meant something. And immediately following, something had to give, ligaments, muscles, even bones. But constantly that idea was uppermost in his mind—keeping the other fellow off balance just enough to render him totally incapable of doing anything for his own good. What he couldn't do was usually for the everlasting good of Gotch.

Since the other chap was constantly trying to get himself righted and to trim ship, there must inevitably come the big moment, the crucial instant when he is totally uncovered. It takes instinct to sense this, even though ordinary eyes, looking carefully, do not even see it. The capable grappler has that instinct. Gotch had it super-humanly developed. It was no hothouse development with him. It was there when Mrs. Gotch's little boy let out his first squawk to this world—the world that was later to become his some thirty years later.

It is something that cannot be taught. It may be developed but, if it isn't there natively, it never will be there.

Hack loved to work in the upper regions, true to the early influence and teachings of his beloved Graeco-Roman. Don't think that he wasn't a good general and a regular field marshal. He was all of that, having—one thing in common with Gotch—a rare gift of patience. He worked in a sort of Marathon manner, waiting for the other fellow's strength to seep away, giving him the necessary rope with which to strangle himself.

Gotch roamed the Seven Seas in characteristic freebooter and piratical style. He played no favorites in grabbing for portions of a foe's frame. He knew no equator such as that Hack figured. Gotch was as free in his attentions to the toes as he was to the top of a man's head.



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The main question in these matches between this tremendous pair was whether Hack could slam a nelson or a hammerlock or something of the sort on Gotch before Frank could dive underneath and come up with his crotch hold or something equally positive. You see, Hack, by habit, worked mostly north of the equator; Gotch, while always free-lancing, preferred the southern portion.

In dispositions there was nothing in common. Gotch was born of farmer parents in only moderately good circumstances. They had land but nothing to waste in the way of money. Hence Frank got merely what hundreds of thousands of other farmers' sons received in the way of a bringing up. As for amusements he had to make them himself. There was nothing of the silver spoon about his early life. He was taught to treasure the pennies that later he might revere the dollars.

So his tastes never became profligate, neither were there at any time touches of extravagance or wastefulness. Even when championship days dawned and coin came pouring in like a stream of the golden corn off those broad Humboldt county acres there was little suspicion that the wad so tightened in leaner days might loosen a bit.

If, perhaps, Frank never was always the farmer, he at least never lost those bucolic ideas inculcated in his youth. He seldom remained in the big city longer than it took him or his agent to collect.

While Hack's birth might have been exactly as humble and perhaps more so than the American's, his early bringing up was different. He got into the show business at an early age, and his associations were entirely of another sort. Hack lived a far more luxurious life than Gotch although I'd say George was just as careful of his money.

George was an idol and enjoyed the experience. He loved to be fêted and wined and dined. To such things Gotch turned a scornful face and sneaked back to Humboldt at the first sign of public adulation. Hack was the hail fellow well met. Gotch was hard to approach and rather difficult to become acquainted with. He was natively suspicious of all things citified.

Hack loved to loll in the lap of luxury as exemplified by high priced hotels and the home of dukes and lords and, inevitably, lassies. His slant at life was entirely different from Gotch's. While the perfection of that glorified body of his was his one and only obsession, he found time for the drawing room and the tea table of dear ol' Lunnon.

Such things didn't make of Hackenschmidt the rugged personality on the mat that he found in the rough-toss Gotch. The European atmosphere so thoroughly enjoyed in the Hackenschmidt nostrils, I think, was inclined to soften whatever ferocity he might have had.

Always I have thought ego, a man's excellent opinion of himself, was one of the greatest assets an athlete could have—up to a certain

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degree. Beyond that degree or at a stage where this ego gets into his own hair and starts to pull, it's a positive detriment, keeps him from a fair estimate of an opponent's capabilities and makes for too high an appraisal of his own.

When Hack first wrestled Gotch, his own conceit gave him a rather contemptuous opinion of American wrestlers. You see, he had beaten Tom Jenkins without a great deal of trouble some years before, Tom then being American champion. So when Hack came back and was sought for a meeting with Gotch, then the best in this country after his defeat of this same Jenkins, Hack was rather difficult. Most of the suggestions made to him met with rather condescending smiles and often there was a none-too-polite yawn behind his broad hand and an air that plainly said: "Well, it's a bit tiresome but quite amusing, I'd say."

That's why he didn't train so well for the first match. For the second match he undoubtedly was in the real shape of his career but, sad to relate, we must add a qualifying statement to that by adding "two weeks before the match." At that time, in the middle of August, 1911, just after he landed in New York, he might have beaten the world, Gotch included.

Something serious happened. Dr. Benjamin Franklin Roller had gone to Europe with Jack Curley to train Hack, did his work faithfully, come back with the "Lion," and, when Chicago was reached, began to put the final polishing touches on George's condition.

The very first day there was a sharp, snapping sound during the workout and George let out a shill cry of pain. Consternation and plenty of it, doctors, surgeons, bonesetters, and all else, but the toughest job was to keep those nosey sportswriters from getting the news. It was stated that Hack would take a rest from mat work as he already was in grand shape. He looked it, so the statements were not unreasonable.

But from that minute Hackenschmidt was not only a sadly changed man but he was a thoroughly licked man. Though I was informed immediately afterwards that the injury would have yielded to treatment within the two weeks before the match, Hack declined all offers and suggestions. Then came commands from the frantic Curley and his co-promoters, who were fingering a tremendous advance sale, a portion of it already expended in the necessary costs of a show of that size.

To commands, Hackenschmidt paid less than no attention. He moped, at times fumed and raved like a crazy man, then went away by himself for hours, even getting out of bed at two and three in the morning to moon around on the streets, apparently in a mental fog.

"If he were a game man, he'd snap out of it," one of his handlers told me. "He had a bad knee but it would be all right in a few days



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if he'd give it attention. He's used to being babied in Europe. When we don't do it here he sunks."

That was one man's opinion, and as he was a man I'd known for quite a few years and respected as a man and a great wrestler, I also respected his opinion, though many times I've found such bitter words often are born of a deep personal feeling, or dislike, or something of the sort.

Well, that's the way things dragged on until the day of the match. The papers were kind but kept hinting that something might be wrong in the Hack camp as he hadn't been working. The thing couldn't be denied but was glossed over as best it could be.

Sure enough, when the parade from the dressing rooms to the ring began, there was Hack in the midst of his entourage *walking with a decided limp!*

The ring was pitched out over the home plate in the ball park and there were no spectators sitting closer to it than the front row of boxes, so every one of those 28,000 spectators, the largest crowd that had ever witnessed an important wrestling match in this country, had a full and complete view of his crippled condition.

And I've always felt, as I too watched the pitiful spectacle, that Hack rather gloried in this rôle of martyr, as he evidently thought himself, and positively emphasized that horrible limp.

There was a gasp of astonishment from that crowd, a throng that had paid nearly $90,000 to see this championship match that was, even now, before the men entered the ring, nothing but a fiasco. Then there was a roar of disapproval and disappointment and, well—what could be done? Nothing but go on with the match.

Match, indeed! It was terrible! The tremendous Gotch, in perfect shape and looking as if he could turn over a Baldwin locomotive, had heard rumors far out in Humbolt and, now that he was face to face with his man, knew at once that it wasn't a match for him, but just a basket picnic with breast of partridge and guava jelly as luncheon bits.

Immediately, Gotch found which was the injured leg and went for it. Hack yelled and that was another tip-off. It's too farcical to recount in full detail, but the falls lasted only thirty minutes in all and the disgruntled crowd sifted slowly out of the park.

The next day I talked with Dr. B. F. Roller, who had spent an entire summer with the "Lion," most of it training at the latter's home in Shoreham, not far from London and a beautiful seaside resort. The good doctor registered deepest scorn of his late principal. I recall very well what he said for I printed it at the time in my Chicago paper.

"He was a great man when we left England but he started to fail as soon as we landed on this side," Roller told me. "Then I could

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see and 'feel' him start to collapse. His greatest fault is his extreme stubbornness. At least I'll call it that.

"There's only one way to see him at his best. Don't give him more than an hour's time to think over a match and then he'll show you something. Give him time to think and let that stuff creep up in his neck and you'll see a sure-enough quitter who isn't worth a rap in front of a good man.

"There was a slight injury, that's true, but only something that a game man would have shaken off overnight. It wouldn't have bothered a man who really was insistent upon winning. It has been said that a man can worry himself into a state of sheer illness before a match, that his temperament may be such that it will defeat him, but when you analyze these things and simmer them all down, doesn't it show a lack of gameness? And what, after all, was there to be afraid of?

"There is a certain glorious something in a game man's defeat. Who but scorns a coward?

"Some tell me that Hack didn't get started. Why not? That's a matter of gameness, too. They say also that Gotch's gameness always has been under suspicion. Be that as it may, he was game enough in both of his meetings with Hackenschmidt—in fact, much too game for the other fellow.

"I realized two days ago that Hack was a wrecked athlete. He was through. He was so irritable that nobody could go near him. For months I had been telling him, and he seemed to be listening intently and duly impressed, that the thing to do was to rush Gotch right from the first bell. 'Don't let him get set; go right after him and keep after him all the time,' I said over and over again. I know Gotch and know he likes to do the crowding himself. When you take that away from him, you've got him without his best asset.

"What happened just before the match when I reminded him of what he had agreed to do? 'You shut up!' he yelled at me, 'I'll do what I feel like.' Then I knew he was licked. Mind you, he didn't complain at all about his bad leg. He appeared to have forgotten that entirely. It couldn't have hurt him because he's a great complainer and that would have given him his excuse.

"In between falls, he paced up and down his dressing room like a wild man. He wouldn't listen or even speak to any one. 'For God's sake, rush him this time and try and make a showing!' I yelled at him as he left the corner.

"I don't know whether he heard me or not for he acted like he was dazed. But he did rush for a minute or two and got the crowd excited but after that he was the same old nobody again and was flopped easily. I am deeply disappointed.

"In the gymnasium, Hack is the greatest workman, the master, but,



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unfortunately for all of our party, championship matches are not decided in gymnasiums."

So much for what Roller said after the match. In most of those opinions I concur.

Standing as I was right over the men I can recite to you exactly what was said in that final fall. There was a brief period of pulling and hauling, then Gotch reached Hack's knees, picked him up, turned him over and tried to reach for his favorite crotch hold. Hack kept his legs spread and thus avoided this clever attempt. Gotch then grabbed for a toe hold, but Hack's right leg was too strong. Gotch then essayed a hammer on the right arm, but Hack's prodigious strength again prevailed and Gotch was tossed off.

Gotch next tried on the other side for a hammer lock but Hack's stubby, strong arm again crushed the champion off. Finding those arms invulnerable, Gotch missed for a body grip, slipped to his knees and as he did so Hack suddenly rushed, got a body hold himself and, amid wild yelps from the crowd, threw the champion heavily to the mat.

Frank bounced about like a rubber ball, flopping from side to side like a frightened seal, and on the third attempt rolled away out of danger. Once more on his feet he stepped in, dived into Hack's legs, and upended him. Gotch shot down instantly for a toe hold, and Hack, forgetting all instructions and coaching, stiffened the leg. Quick as a flash, Gotch jumped on the leg like a hungry tiger.

The knee sank to the floor with a crash and Hack uttered a cry of pain. Gotch reached for and got a toe hold and started to twist. Hack howled again and, as he flopped to his left side, Gotch said very calmly, looking almost in his face: "Will you go down or shall I break it?"

"Stop, I'll go down," shrilled Hack and the great match was over.

Adding all of this to what I saw during the two hours that I was in the ring with them as referee on the occasion of their first meeting, I naturally came to the conclusion that Hack was far from being a game man.

And let me add this also. There were several times during the many that I observed Frank Gotch that the thought flashed to my mind that he wasn't just exactly through and through one hundred per cent on the courageous side. Two or three times I saw needless acts of absolute cruelty on his part that I did not like. Always will I think that the really courageous man, no matter how ferocious and filled with the killing instinct and eager to win he may be, is willing to let up on a beaten foe and not punish needlessly or wantonly.

There had been a world of betting on this ball park match and generally Gotch was a strong favorite, the odds ranging at different

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times from 4 to 5 down to as low as 1 to 3, depending upon the current rumors of the day.

But an hour before the men entered the ring it was decided at a meeting of those chiefly concerned in the match that it would be a wise and entirely safe gesture to have the referee call all bets off just before the match began.

Herman Schuettler, then assistant chief of police, urged this as a matter of policy as did also Charley Comiskey, owner of the park where the match was held. The latter always was a sturdy foe of betting on ball games and carried out this idea after he had rented the park for the match.

But the real storm didn't break until the next day. It appears that a lot of three-card monte and shell workers were attracted to the park by the huge crowd and plied their trade in the most brazen manner adjacent to the brick walls of the park and along the several streets leading to the grounds. The *Chicago Tribune* picked this up and showed that the police stationed there, along with several men in high command, did nothing at all about stopping this open gambling.

The exposure caused such a furor that an investigation was started, and this didn't stop until the police force had been thoroughly reorganized. As a further result, the rank of inspector was completely abolished and many of those in high spots were demoted and several discharged outright.

As a promotional effort, this second match always will stand out in my memory as one of the world's greatest accomplishments in that line. It was Jack Curley's effort almost single-handedly. He had help on the details from his partners but it was Curley, and nobody else, whose indomitable will and courage overcame a multitude of obstacles that were thrown in his path from all sides.

And I want in passing to pay Curley the compliment now that I placed him on the highest pedestal for promotional versatility. Mind you, wrestling is but one of his many lines. He has done big things in other branches and to me, after over forty years' experience in sports writing and refereeing, and that takes me through the entire gamut, up and down the keyboard and back again, there never will be again his equal in daring, sheer skillful resourcefulness, and the attainment of final results.



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Chapter XV

# Gotch's Retirement

AFTER Gotch's second victory over Hackenschmidt, he decided he had reached the goal of his ambition and would retire, the undefeated wrestling king of the universe, but before hanging up his togs, he would exhibit himself in exhibitions for a year. During his tour, he tackled all comers and came through triumphantly, as was expected. There was no one who could hold a candle up to the inimitable Iowan, so, early in 1913, he publicly announced his retirement.

Just before he did so, he made it known that, like the plan previously arranged by Jim Jeffries when he retired, he would name the two leading contenders and would match them, with him as the referee. To the victor, Gotch proposed to hand over his championship. When the time came to arrange the "elimination" bout, Jess Westergaard and Henry Ordeman were named.

On the day of the bout, which took place in Omaha, where Westergaard was a popular hero, Ordeman, contrary to expectations, beat Westergaard, a protege of Gotch, and the champion abdicated in Ordeman's favor.

In 1914 a match was arranged between Ordeman and Charley Cutler, another Gotch favorite, and Cutler twice threw the new wrestling king within 37 minutes at Minneapolis, thereby winning the crown. Later Dr. Roller defeated Cutler and for a time the championship swayed between them, the pair seesawing in three bouts. Of those contests we will have more to say in the next chapter.

In the meantime, Gotch's popularity continued and under the guidance of Jack Curley, he decided to make hay while the sun shone and give wrestling exhibitions. This was arranged a year before Gotch's death. He became associated with Jack in the exploitation of Jess Willard as a co-attraction with the Sells-Floto circus. His object, as he said at the time, was to prepare himself for a comeback. He tired of idleness and made up his mind that if he could get into proper condition, he would do a Jim Jeffries, by reclaiming the title he had abdicated, and meet Joe Stecher for the crown.

Joe Stecher, the scissors expert, was the big noise of the day and as he came from Nebraska, there was real, true frontier feeling between them and their followers. Besides, Gotch had handled Charley Cutler against Stecher at Omaha in their memorable match on July 4 of that year and Gotch was itchy to try his skill against Stecher.

Bad weather followed the circus from the time that Gotch joined



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us at Wichita to Kansas City, St. Louis, the Pennsylvania coal regions and back again to the Middle-West through Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. It was at Waukesha, Wis., while wrestling at the matinee with Big Bob Monagoff that Gotch tripped and tore some ligaments in his foot. He was forced to quit the circus and after a short stop in Chicago, he returned to his Iowa home, where complications set in. He was advised to go to Hot Springs and it was while trying to make that city that he was carried from a train at Chicago, suffering from a severe attack of indigestion. Once more he returned to his home where he lay bed-ridden for several months and then died on December 16, 1917. Uremic poisoning was given as the cause.

Gotch had been quite thrifty during his wrestling career and when he died, he left an estate valued at close to $400,000. His wife, the former Gladys Oesterich, a home-town belle whom he had married in 1911, and a son, survived him. Frank was 41 years old when the Grim Reaper struck him down.

Thus ended the career of the greatest wrestler of modern times. He had annexed the American title from Tom Jenkins in 1904 and never thereafter lost it. When he whipped Hackenschmidt he won the world crown. One famous wrestler who did put Gotch's shoulders to the mat was Fred Beell, who in 1933 was killed by thugs in a holdup out West. Fred, at the time of his death, was a special bank policeman. Gotch wasn't world champ at the time when Beell pinned him.

Of Gotch it may be said that he was a great strategist, a fast matman and most courageous. His famous toe hold was the most gruelling hold used. It was against Hackenschmidt that Gotch introduced and perfected the toe hold against which no man could hold out when properly applied, with the force and twist. The hold caused great anguish to an opponent and soon made the strongest of them, weak. He did as much to bring the mat sport to the front in this country, as did John L. Sullivan for boxing.

In his memoirs which appeared over a stretch of two years in *The Ring* magazine, Jack Curley, who undoubtedly knows more about wrestling and the men who have performed in this country during the past thirty years than any other sports critic, said of Gotch that he was one of the greatest mat stars of all time. However, he did not think that Gotch earned better than third place in an all-star cast chosen from 1890 to the present day.

In Curley's rating, he placed George Hackenschmidt on top, Tom Jenkins in second place and Gotch under him, with the explanation that although Gotch defeated Hackenschmidt, there never was a wrestler like the "Russian Lion." Speaking of Hackenschmidt, Curley said: "He, in my opinion, represented the best, most physically perfect mat star that ever came to these shores. He was a


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marvelously built fellow with an abundance of strength, an agile, slippery mat man who knew the tricks of wrestling as few others did. Despite his defeats by Gotch, Hackenschmidt stood out as the master."

In placing Gotch in third position, Curley declared that his reason for not putting Frank above Jenkins or Hackenschmidt was because the Iowa farmer often showed a lack of quality, while this could not be said of either the "Russian" or Jenkins.

There are many readers of this book who will differ with Curley, especially when the records show that Gotch had twice defeated the Russian Lion, yet we must give Curley credit for knowing what it is all about. His opinion certainly is worth considerable, especially so in view of the fact that he handled both men, knew them intimately, and knew their capabilities.

However, leaving aside for the moment the question of superiority, we must admit that Gotch did for modern wrestling what John L. Sullivan accomplished for boxing in the old days. It was Gotch's victories over the hitherto invincible Hackenschmidt that made him the most popular mat star in America and started a movement among college men to take up wrestling.

With the passing of Gotch out of the mat picture, a new batch of grapplers came to the fore—fellows who had been working in preliminaries and in star bouts during the last two or three years of Gotch's reign, but who, because of his prowess, were halted in their climb to the top. But when Gotch died, those fellows came along with a rush and, throughout the middle West and far West in particular, new stars were hailed almost overnight.

Although the wrestling game has had many fine huskies since Gotch's time, none quite measured up to his standard. Stanislaus Zbyszko and Strangler Lewis were the nearest approach to Gotch in strength and in general wrestling ability. The only grappler of recent years who, experts feel, would have been the master of both Gotch and Hackenschmidt, was the great Gama of India. His one-sided victory over Zbyszko proved the Indian's calibre, Gama was one of the most versatile wrestlers of modern times.

Many stories have been told of wrestlers who tried to take Frank Gotch into camp when he was barnstorming in various parts of the country, but the one I'm about to tell has never appeared in print though it often has been the cause of lively arguments in this neck of the woods. It's the tale of a Umatilla County Redskin who lays claim to having won the world heavyweight wrestling championship from the famed Gotch. How come? Well, here's the story:

It happened in 1904, according to tales still related among the Indians of the Umatilla Reservation. Frank Gotch was then World's Champion wrestler but a Umatilla Indian named Motanic made him

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pound the mat at Pendleton, Oregon. Officially, the Indian received no credit as Gotch loudly protested his opponent's tactics and claimed a foul, but every Red Man on the reservation to this day claims that Gotch was the first to resort to unfair tactics, and that an Indian had won the World's Championship.

After the great Frank Gotch had become world's champion, he made a barnstorming trip through the Northwest, in company with a number of other top notch wrestlers and fighters. Their coming was ballyhooed with large bill board posters, which proclaimed that anyone who could successfully stay in the ring with Gotch for fifteen minutes without being pinned to the mat, would receive one hundred dollars cash.

At the Storie Ranch, on the Umatilla Reservation, the cowboys urged Motanic to accept the challenge. Motanic was a man of exceptionally powerful build. He could pack a deer on his back for miles apparently without effort, and had been seen to pick up a two-hundred and fifty pound hog, which was kicking and squirming, and throw it into a buckboard.

Now, as Gotch did not weigh as much as the hog, and knowing how difficult a hog is to handle with bare hands, the boys at the ranch were convinced that Motanic could throw the champion. The more they talked it up, the more certain they were of victory.

But the next thing was to get the Indian to wrestle. He declared he could throw any Indian in Oregon, but he did not know about this white champion, Gotch. In Indian fashion, all one has to do is throw one's opponent off his feet and the match is over. The idea of pinning two shoulders to the mat had never occurred to the Indian, nor to the boys at the ranch.

This was before the day of the automobile and the radio had not yet been conceived. The only news from the outside world was obtained through the columns of the local weekly paper and gossip with the city drummers around the big stove at the store.

Pictures of Gotch and Jeffries and other champions of the time had been printed in the local paper. Most of these pictures showed them in various training poses, frequently running up a street, doing "roadwork." Those pictures inspired the Indian's self-appointed promoters to rig him out in long winter underwear and chase him all over the country.

One of the boys at the ranch, who had earned a reputation as a fighter on Saturday night special shows was selected as trainer. After the first day, the training was so strenuous that he went on horseback with the Indian, who dog-trotted across plowed fields and up mountain sides on foot. To this day the boys declare the Indian could have outlasted the horse.

Enlisting the co-operation of the girls at the ranch, Motanic was



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outfitted with wrestling trunks like the papers had pictured Gotch. Thus attired, the Indian made an imposing picture. His arms were as large as the average man's legs and there wasn't an ounce of fat on him.

Came the day of the match. The old Matlock Opera House was crowded with white men and Indians until even standing room was at a premium. Motanic was in his corner with his trainer. Gotch came in with his handlers, and they explained that only the strangle hold was barred. The Indian didn't know what that meant, but it didn't make any difference anyway.

Gotch's handlers explained that if the champion got to hurting the Indian, he could pound the mat and Gotch would let him loose. However, if he pounded the mat before the fifteen minutes were up, he would lose the match and not get the one hundred dollars. They even pounded on the mat to make it clear to the Indian what he was to do.

The Indian said, "Whoever pounds mat first loses match?" The handlers explained that this was the rule.

The gong sounded. The Indian took the offensive. He charged across the ring like an angry bull and seized the champion about the waist and threw him across the arena on his head. The crowd went crazy. The Indians started a warcry and the cowboys went wild. The champion had been thrown off his feet. Motanic had won! He had thrown the World's Champion, and this was victory according to the wrestling knowledge of the crowd.

Motanic had turned his back and started to his corner when Gotch, who had regained his feet, nailed him with a hammer-lock. Down they went to the mat, and over they rolled. Finally the seat of Gotch's trunks were directly in the Indian's face. The Indian bowed his neck and sunk his teeth in his adversary's anatomy; and how!

Gotch howled and pounded the mat.

The referee attempted to separate them, but the Indian hung on. He was sure after his "pound of flesh."

The champion's handlers now began to attack, but the cowboys backed them off with drawn guns. Finally, the Indian's trainer got him to let loose. He was just in time, as the house was in an uproar. The crowd all seemed to be trying to get to the center of the arena to take part in the fight.

With the aid of trainers and police, each wrestler was finally taken to his dressing room. There they asked Motanic why he did not try to pin the champion's shoulders to the mat.

"Oh, hell," said the Indian, "they told me make him pound mat, me win. Well, he pounded mat, didn't he?"

The cowboy who had served as trainer for Motanic, in his slow western drawl asked, "But why did you bite him?"

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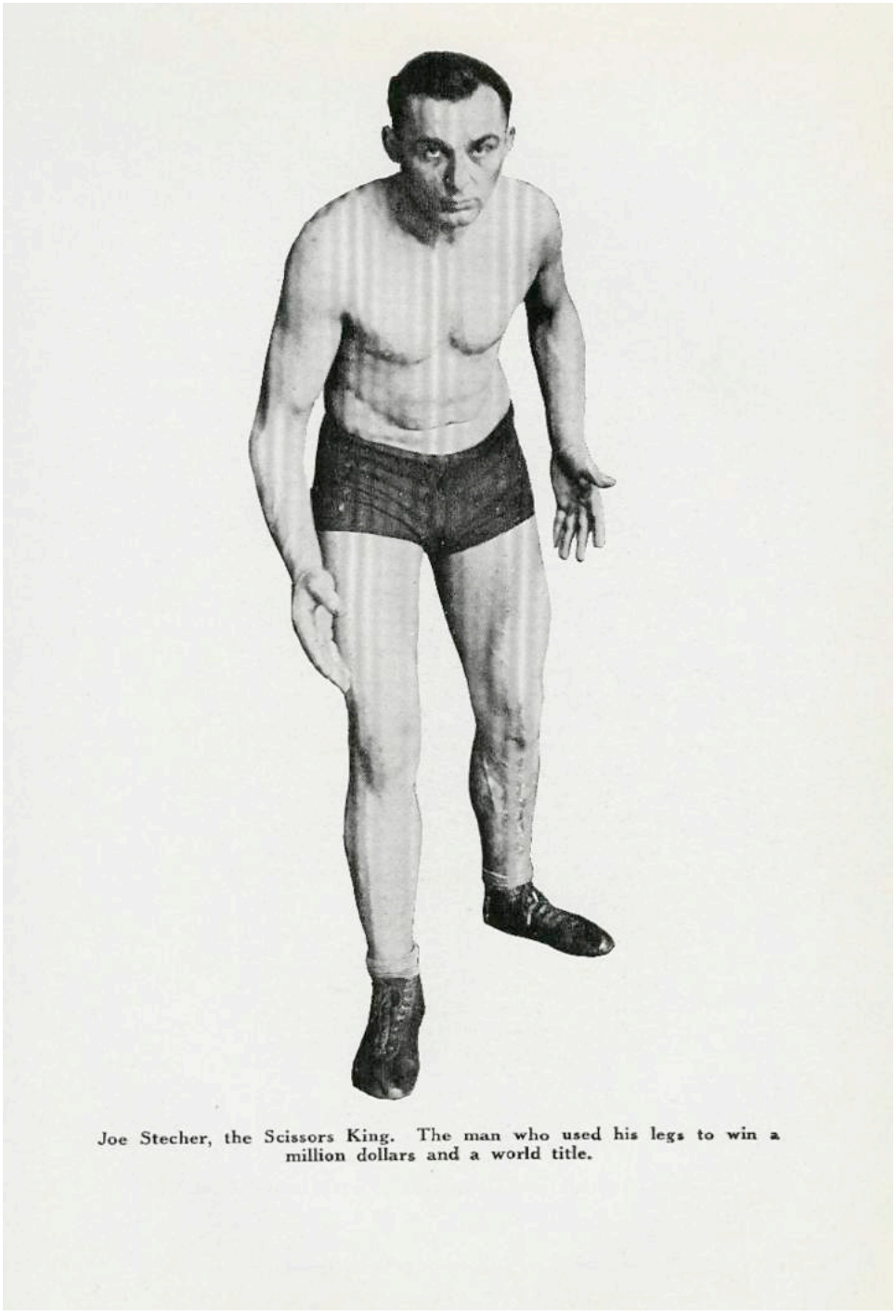
Dr. Roller, first college athlete to take up wrestling as a profession.


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Charles Cutler as he looked at the height of his career.

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Joe Stecher, the Scissors King. The man who used his legs to win a million dollars and a world title.


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Earl Caddock, the champion of a "Thousand Holds."

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The Indian drew his blankets more tightly about his shoulders. He waited half a minute before he grunted his reply: "Why for he twist my arm?"

Gotch's complete record follows:

Born April 27, 1878, Humboldt, Ia. Height, 5 ft. 11½ in. Weight, 210 lbs. Nationality, German-American.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1899 | | | City. |
| April | 2 | —Marshall Green | W Humboldt, Ia. |
| June | 16 | —Dan McLeod | L Luverne, Ia. |
| Dec. | 18 | —Farmer Burns | L Ft. Dodge, Ia. |
| 1900 | | | |
| Jan. | 8 | —Linn Ruby | W Ft. Dodge, Ia. |
| Feb. | 7 | —Jim Galliton | W Omaha. |
| Mar. | 2 | —Bert Scheller | W Sioux City, Ia. |
| June | 16 | —Charles Moth | W Humboldt, Ia. |
| Sept. | 11 | —Duncan McMillan | W Winterset, Ia. |
| Sept. | 26 | —Lou Bucholz | W Forest City, Ia. |
| 1901 | | | |
| Mar. | | —O. Wasson | W Burlington, Ia. |
| July | | —White | W Dawson City. |
| Aug. | 26 | —Swanson | W Dawson City. |
| Sept. | 15 | —Riley | W Dawson City. |
| Oct. | 1 | —J. H. McLaughlin | W Dawson City. |
| 1902 | | | |
| Jan. | 5 | —Miller | W Sioux City, Ia. |
| Feb. | 2 | —Morad Ali | W Davenport, Ia. |
| Mar. | 22 | —Frank Coleman | W Omaha. |
| Dec. | 26 | —Christ Pearson | W Tacoma. |
| 1903 | | | |
| Jan. | 10 | —Carl Pons | W Seattle. |
| Feb. | 22 | —Tom Jenkins | L Cleveland. |
| July | 26 | —Aldrich | W Des Moines. |
| Sept. | 4 | —J. Anderson | W Bellingham. |
| Sept. | 20 | —Emil Klank | W Bellingham. |
| Sept. | 20 | —Coleman | W Bellingham. |
| Oct. | 5 | —Farmer Burns | W Bellingham. |
| Dec. | 11 | —Farmer Burns | W Whatcom. |
| Dec. | 14 | —Chief Two Feathers | W Vancouver. |
| 1904 | | | |
| Jan. | 28 | —Tom Jenkins | W Bellingham. |
| Feb. | 24 | —King Lo (Jap) | W Seattle. |
| Mar. | 10 | —Chris Pearson | W Iowa City, Ia. |
| April | 11 | —Tim Harrington | W Butte, Mont. |
| June | 27 | —Jim Parr | W Buffalo. |
| July | 20 | —John Berg | W Seattle. |
| Aug. | 6 | —Dan S. McLeod | W Vancouver. |
| Oct. | 5 | —Dan S. McLeod | W Vancouver. |
| Dec. | 21 | —Jim Parr | L Buffalo. |
| 1905 | | | |
| Jan. | 1 | —Emile Maupaus | L Montreal. |
| Jan. | 11 | —Yankee Rodgers | W Montreal. |
| Feb. | 1 | —Tom Jenkins | W Cleveland. |
| Feb. | 6 | —Ed Atherton | W Elmira, N. Y. |
| Feb. | 24 | —Jim Parr | W New York City. |
| Feb. | 25 | —Joe Grant | W Washington. |



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Mar. 2—Charles Wittmer ..... W Cincinnati.
Mar. 10—Jim Parr ..... W Utica, N. Y.
Mar. 15—Tom Jenkins ..... L New York City.
Mar. 21—Emil Selva ..... W Paterson, N. J.
Mar. 22—Gus Americus ..... W Washington.
May 19—Tom Jenkins ..... L New York City.
June 15—Beck Olson ..... W Kansas City.
July 4—Alec Samuelson ..... W Minneapolis.
Aug. 10—Duncan McMillan ..... W Spokane.
Sept. 4—Jack Carkeek ..... W Butte, Mont.
Oct. 15—Doc Fillmore ..... W Des Moines.
Oct. 30—Hilding Ardahl ..... W Des Moines.
Nov. 14—Emil Klank ..... W Rockford, Ill.
Dec. 15 —Yankee Rodgers ..... W Utica, N. Y.
Dec. 22—Dan S. McLeod ..... W Montreal.
Dec. 27—Emile Maupaus ..... W Ottawa, Can.

1906

Jan 9—Chas. Hackenschmidt ..... W Des Moines.
Jan. 12—Appollo ..... W Montreal.
Jan. 25—Farmer Burns ..... W Kansas City.
Jan. 27—Chas. Hackenschmidt ..... W Kansas City.
Feb. 2—John Voss ..... W Ft. Dodge, Ia.
Feb. 6—Charles Kaiser, George Gray, Con Albright, threw each twice..... Rochester.
Feb. 23—Chas. Hackenschmidt ..... W St. Louis.
Feb. 26—Jim Parr ..... W Kansas City.
Feb. 27—Hank Rogers ..... W Kansas City.
Mar. 23—Chas. Olson ..... W Asheville, N. C.
April 6—Karahanoff ..... W Montreal.
April 30—J Perelli, Opollo ..... * Kansas City.
*Lost handicap match.
May 14—Pietro .....Stopped by Police Montreal.
May 23—Tom Jenkins ..... W Kansas City.
June 9—Farmer Burns ..... W St. Louis.
July 4—Jim Parr ..... W Humboldt, Ia.
July 20—Chas. Olson ..... W New Orleans.
Aug. 27—Hjalmar Lundin ..... W Des Moines.
Sept. 28—Jim Parr ..... W Chicago.
Oct. 7—Chas. Olson and Yankee Rodgers..... W Kansas City.
Oct. 12—Dr. B. F. Roller..... ** Seattle.
**No fall 1 hour.
Nov. 19—Alex Swanson and Fred Bartle..... W Lima, O.
Nov. 23—Leo Pardello ..... W Chicago.
Dec. 1—Fred Beell ..... L New Orleans.
Dec. 17—Fred Beell ..... W Kansas City.

1907

April 26—Fred Beell ..... W Chicago.
Aug. 23—Emil Klank ..... W Denver.
Oct. 29—Emil Klank and War Eagle ..... W Kansas City.
Dec. 6—War Eagle ..... W Chicago.

1908

Jan. 21—Hjalmar Lundin ..... W Lowell, Mass.
Jan. 24—Albert Solomon ..... W Utica, N. Y.
Feb. 7—Fred Beell ..... W Chicago.
Mar. 6—Joe Rodgers .....F to T New York.
Gotch was to throw Rodgers 5 times in 1 hour, but threw him twice.
April 3—Geo. Hackenschmidt..... W Chicago.
For championship of the world. Hackenschmidt gave up at the end of 2 hours, 3 minutes.
May 8—Hjalmar Lundin ..... W Kansas City.

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May 20—Chas. Olson ..... St. Louis.
Failed to throw in 15 minutes.
July 1—Dr. B. F. Roller .....W Seattle.
Twelve exhibitions through Kansas, Texas and Oklahoma in July.
July 15—Threw Klank, Williams and Jones, Dallas, Texas., 19 minutes.
In addition to the above matches Gotch defeated the following: 1905—McMahon, Gordon, Prof. M. J. Dwyer, Carl Bush, Chas. Conkle, Gus Davisson. 1906—Schoenfeldt, John Anderson, John J. Rooney, Tom Griffin. 1908—Chas. Willoughby, Dave Moir, Hanson, Carl Bush.
Gotch defeated 200 men in 15 minutes handicap matches on his theatrical tours in America.
1908—Toured England, meeting all comers.

1909

Mar. 25—Raoul De Reuen .....W Kansas City.
Mar. 26—John Perelli .....W Omaha, Neb.
April 14—Yussif Mahmout .....W Chicago, Ill.
April 17—H. Lundin .....W Chicago, Ill.
April 20—Dan McLeod .....W Waterloo, Ia.
April 22—Ben Reeves .....W Boone, Ia.
April 27—Dr. B. F. Roller .....W Kansas City.
April 29—Chas. Hackenschmidt .....W Memphis, Tenn.
May 6—Fred Beell .....W Denver, Colo.
May 27—Oscar Wassem, Kubiek .....W Sioux, City.
May 21—Ed. Ferguson and M. Yokell.....W Salt Lake City.
May 29—Dan McDonald, Joe Ackron and Prof. Miller .....W Sioux Falls, S. D.
June 4—Henry Ordeman .....W Minneapolis.
June 14—Tom Jenkins .....W Des Moines, Ia.
Nov. 6—Frank Prindle .....W Chicago.
Nov. 9—Giovanni Raicevich .....W Chicago.
Nov. 10—Hilding Ardahl .....W Ottumwa, Ia.
Nov. 11—Tom Challender .....W Decatur, Ill.
Nov. 15—Dr. B. F. Roller .....W Kansas City, Mo
Nov. 25—Zybszko .....L Buffalo, N. Y.
Handicap match, one hour. No fall.
Dec. 25—Con. O'Kelly .....W St. Louis, Mo.

1910

Feb. 28—Jim Essen .....W Chicago.
May 13—Chris Person .....W Houghton, Mich.
*June 1—S. Zbyszko .....W Chicago.
*First fall 6¼ seconds.

1911

Feb. 6—Kalefosman .....W Sioux City.
Feb. 7—Fred Beell .....W Des Moines, Ia.
Feb. 8—Americus .....W Kansas City, Mo.
Feb. 20—Americus .....W Boston, Mass.
Feb. 22—Peter Noert .....W Hartford, Conn.
Mar. 2—Paul Schmidt .....W Buffalo.
Mar. 7—Carl Lehts .....W Duluth.
Mar. 9—George Eberg .....W Winnipeg.
Mar. 15—Ernest Koch .....W Kansas City.
Mar. 16—Henry Barn .....W Chicago.
Mar. 17—Chas. Cutler .....W Lincoln, Neb.
Mar. 18—Demetral .....W Omaha.
Mar. 20—Fred Beell .....W Wichita, Kas.
Mar. 25—Tom Jenkins .....W Denver.
Mar. 27—Jack Leon .....W Salt Lake City.
April 12—Henry Ordeman .....W San Francisco.
April 17—Jesse Westergaard .....W Los Angeles.
May 5—Fred Beell .....W Knoxville, Tenn.


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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sept. | 4—George Hackenschmidt | W | Chicago, Ill. |
| Oct. | 13—George Padoubny | W | Kansas City, Mo. |
| Oct. | 14—Fred Beell | W | St. Joseph, Mo. |
| Oct. | 17—Emilo Pietro | W | Des Moines, Ia. |
| Oct. | 28—Jesse Westergaard | W | Denver, Colo. |
| Oct. | 30—Wm. Demetral | W | Salt Lake City. |
| Nov. | 3—Jack Leon | W | Seattle. |
| Dec. | 1—Chas. Hackenschmidt | W | Minneapolis. |
| Dec. | 27—Alex Monroe | W | Kansas City. |

1912

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mar. | 12—Joe Geshtowt | W | Chicago. |
| Mar. | 12—Paul Martinson | W | Chicago. |
| Mar. | 13—Henry Ordeman | F T | Minneapolis. |
| Mar. | 14—Plestina | W | St. Paul, Minn. |
| Mar. | 15—Henry Ordeman | F T | Chicago. |
| Mar. | 17—Plestina | W | Milwaukee. |
| Mar. | 22—Henry Ordeman | F T | Omaha. |
| June | 13—Americus | W | Baltimore. |
| Aug. | 22—Jess Westergaard | W | Kansas City, Mo. |



**John McMahon, who came from a family of strong men and flourished as a collar-and-elbows wrestler.**

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Chapter XVI

# Hackenschmidt's Career

BEFORE the story of the successor to Gotch is told, the most colorful and interesting career of George Hackenschmidt will be recorded. The Russian Lion, who at this writing is an instructor of physical education to the members of the House of Lords in England and also is busily engaged in writing his memoirs, is enjoying the best of health and is almost as full of vim and pep to-day as he was when in his prime. Well liked throughout England where he has an army of friends, the former world champion wrestler, a credit to the sport in which he gained international fame, finds great pleasure in teaching others that which he had mastered.

Well educated, a highly cultured man who converses in several languages, a student of philosophy and the human body, Hackenschmidt is the author of several books on wrestling and body-building.

The story of Hackenschmidt is so replete with human interest, that the author will let him tell it, in his own words. The following is part of the Russian Lion's "The Story of My Life" as it appears in his splendid book, "The Way to Live in Health and Physical Fitness."

I was born on July 20, 1878 at Dorpat in Russia, where I lived for some time with my parents, a younger brother and a sister. Both my father and mother were of average stature, neither of them displaying any unusual physical characteristics, but both my brother and sister possess more than average strength. My grandfather, the father of my mother—who, by the way, I never knew, as he died when I was only three years old—was always described to me as a big and powerful man. He had migrated to Russia from Sweden some sixty years before. My mother always told me that I was very like my grandfather, except that he was rather taller, being six feet in height.

So far as I can remember, I was, from my earliest years, devoted to all bodily exercises, and by the time I was eight or nine years old I used to order about a small army of boys of my own age—being admittedly the strongest of them all. I was sent to the Dorpat Grammar School (Realschule), and soon showed a preference for the hours spent in the gymnasium.

At a gymnastic competition in the year 1891, when I was fourteen years old, I won a prize as the best gymnast of my own age.

At that date I was 4 feet 7½ inches in height and weighed 122 pounds. Being of a rather big set build, I was one of the best at dumbbell and club exercises and could broad jump more than 16 feet

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and could high jump 4 feet 7½ inches. I could raise and lower a dumbbell weighing 36 pounds, sixteen times with the right hand and 21 times with the left and I could also run 100 yards in 17 seconds. My love for bodily exercises I inherited from my grandfather.

On leaving school in 1895, I entered a large engineering firm in Revel as an apprentice with a view to becoming a practical and technical engineer. I joined the Reval Athletic and Cycling Club and threw myself heart and soul into cycling at which I won many prizes and also took a deep interest in wrestling and strong man athletics.

In September, 1896, I made the acquaintance of George Lurich, then touring in the Eastern provinces with a small company. Lurich challenged all comers and after he had defeated all of the members of our club, I decided to test my skill and being a raw novice, naturally I was defeated by him several times. I mention this because Lurich in later life boasted of the many times he had whipped me yet when I was in my prime, I couldn't get him in the same ring with me.

In February, 1897, a German wrestler, Fritz Konietzko, came to Reval. It was said that at Magdeburg he had beaten the famous Tom Cannon, then in his prime, who in his day, had often wrestled with Abs, a wrestler who enjoyed a big reputation in Germany, and had thus achieved some celebrity in the Graeco-Roman style. I was the only member of the amateur contingent to withstand the German.

We wrestled ten minutes without a fall. Not long after this Ladislaus Pytlasinski, the Polish wrestler, then at the zenith of his fame, came to Reval, and, of course, defeated Konietzko. Pytlasinski defeated me easily and we all learnt a great deal from this great expert of the wrestling arena. In the following year he was the first wrestler to defeat the famous Turk, Kara Ahmed in Paris. I remember, too, a very powerful village schoolmaster in the neighborhood of Reval who was one of the chief opponents of this professional wrestler. He (the schoolmaster) had only a few holds, with which he defeated his opponents. On one occasion he got me down in seven minutes. These defeats all helped me to improve myself.

A slight injury sustained in the exercise of my calling as an engineer—for I was still an amateur—made it necessary for me to seek the help of a doctor. This doctor, an amiable old gentleman, happened to have staying with him a distinguished colleague, Dr. von Krajewski, a physician in ordinary to His Majesty the Czar. This Dr. von Krajewski was the founder of the St. Petersburg Athletic and Cycling Club, of which H.R.H. the Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovitch was President, and which included many aristocratic and wealthy people among its members. Dr. Krajewski, in spite of his fifty-six years, was still a very active and energetic man, and particularly keen on feats of strength and weight-lifting.

He had first taken up this pastime at the mature age of forty-one,

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and by systematic training had attained to a fairly high degree of physical strength. The doctor had, of course, visited our club and recognized me at once. When I had completely undressed in order to facilitate a careful examination of my injury, he, in conjunction with my own doctor, examined my body, and found that with the exception of a slight injury (a contusion of the arm) I was perfectly sound. He invited me to come and stay with him in St. Petersburg, as he wished to have me trained as a professional athlete and wrestler.

I learned that Dr. von Krajewski had also had Lurich in training with him for some time, and he was good enough to say that I possessed possibilities of becoming the strongest man in the world.

Yielding to the persuasion of all my club friends, who congratulated me warmly on Dr. von Krajewski's offer, but against the wishes of my parents, I set out for St. Petersburg early in 1898.

All the professional strong men and wrestlers who appeared at the St. Petersburg theatres visited Dr. von Krajewski and gave exhibitions of their art. While so doing, they were all carefully examined, measured and weighed. Dr. von Krajewski had thus been able to acquire great experience and knowledge of feats of strength and methods of training.

The example set by these artists had a most stimulating influence on us all. Every one seemed put upon his mettle to do his very best. Having now nothing to occupy me but alternate exercise and rest, I made rapid progress in strength. The doctor told me not to touch alcoholic drinks and tobacco, for neither of which I had ever felt any great inclination, and in neither of which I had ever indulged.

Towards the end of April, the famous French wrestler Paul Pons came to St. Petersburg, and I defeated this practised wrestler at the end of forty-five minutes. I also threw Jankowsky in eleven minutes. It is possible that Pons may not have been in his best form on this occasion, as he himself maintained, for some time afterwards I had a much tougher struggle with him.

I was in tip-top condition and was continuing to train steadily when Dr. von Krajewski put down my name to contest the championship of the world and the championship of Europe, at the end of July and beginning of August, which were to be wrestled for in connection with the Sports Exhibition in Vienna.

Although from the date of my first great success in the wrestling ring onwards I trained less and less for weight-lifting records, yet in January, 1899, I pressed a bar of 279¾ lbs with both hands.

The time for my enrollment in the army had now arrived, and I was commanded to join the Preobrashensky Polk (the 1st Life Guards of the Czar), but was released from service after five months. On May 16, in Count Ribeaupierre's riding school, I wrestled to a finish the contest with Herr von Schmelling which had been left



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undecided in the previous year, and defeated him in twenty-five minutes by means of a "half-nelson," thus winning the championship for 1898. A few days later, on May 19, a second victory over Schmelling in forty-four minutes, gained me the Russian Championship in 1899. Schmelling was my toughest opponent.

After that, I again trained for some time at weight-lifting and made some progress, as I jerked a bar of 330 pounds with both hands. But in trying to slow press 286 lbs. with one hand, I strained a sinew in my right shoulder, an injury which was destined to trouble me for years afterwards. At first I thought little of this trifling pain and trained for the Championship of the World wrestling contests in Paris which took place in November. I was firmly resolved to become a professional wrestler. Although my arm had not yet fully recovered I went to Paris and took part in the contests.

The list of competitors for this tournament was as follows: Charles le Meunier (France), Henri Pechon (France), François le Farinier (Swiss), Feriol Marius (France), Henri Alphonse (Swiss), Loir did Porthos, Trillat le Savoyard, Capitant le Parisien, Louis Chappe (all of France), Niemann (Germany), Camillus Evertsen (Denmark), Pietro Dalmasso (Italy), Barnet le Déménageur (France), Jaccavail (France), Devaux (Belgium), Dirk van den Berg (Holland), Raoulle Boucher (France), Raymond Franc (France), Victor Delmas (France), Edgar Joly (France), Hautier le Breton, Leon le Jouteur (France), Bonera Domenico (Italy), Aimable de la Calmette (France), Starck (Germany), Jean le Marseillais (France), Edouard Robin (France), Jax le Taureau (France), Henri Lorange (France), Fengler (Germany), Alis-Amba (Africa), Eberle (Germany), Robinet (France), Laurent le Beaucairois (France), Constant le Boucher (Belgium), Kara Ahmed (Turkey), Charles Poirée (France), Peyrousse (France), Miller (Germany), Paul Pons (France), besides myself.

My first opponent was a medium wrestler, Loir, nicknamed Porthos. I got him down in eighteen seconds! My second was a Frenchman from the South, named Robinet, a wrestler with a fairly good style and till then of fairly high reputation, whom I beat in 4 minutes. I was at that time almost unknown to the general public in France, and every one was astonished to see me defeat the popular Robinet. He was too sportsmanlike to attribute his defeat to accident, but, in answer to questions, said that I was very strong; "he has a grip like a vise, and if he gets you on the ground, you are done for." It was about this time that people began to call me "the Russian Lion."

After the struggle with Robinet, the next morning I went to the Gymnasium Piaza, Rue Faubourg St. Denis, to train, when Leon

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Dumont, the French wrestler, put my shoulder out of joint, and for a long time my right arm seemed half paralyzed.

The third opponent assigned to me was one of the best French mat stars, the versatile Aimable de la Calmette. This athlete, as I soon discovered, was not nearly as strong as I, but *far more experienced,* a fact which made it necessary for me to be careful, for an *experienced* wrestler is far more dangerous than one who is merely strong. Well, I threw the worthy Aimable after forty-seven minutes, but learned a great deal in the course of this struggle. On the following day Laurent le Beaucairois, a very strong and clever performer, appeared upon the scene. Till then I had not believed it possible that so corpulent a man—Laurent weighed 164 pounds, though he was slightly shorter than I—could show so much activity and nimbleness. Laurent was an old hand at the game, having wrestled for *fifteen years* and it did not look as if there was much chance for me who had scarcely had *fifteen months'* experience. We wrestled for thirty minutes, when the referee declared the contest a draw.

Following that bout the weakness in my arm gave me a good deal of trouble, and I thought it best to retire from the tournament, especially as a French surgeon had ordered me to avoid all overstraining for twelve months. I sincerely wish that I had followed his advice!

I looked on at a few more contests and then returned home to have my arm seen to, going in for treatment with electricity for about six months, but I am inclined to fancy that this did me more harm than good. All went well, and in May, 1900, I again began to lift heavy weights.

In June, 1900, a wrestling combat took place at Moscow. This was my first appearance as a professional wrestler. The tournament lasted forty days, my salary being 2,500 francs per month. We were wrestling for two prizes, the championships of St. Petersburg and of Moscow.

As I succeeded in winning both trophies, I gained another 1,500 fr. for the St. Petersburg championship and 2,500 fr. more, being the amount of the first Moscow prize. I met Aimable and Petroff, and defeated them. I also threw the eel-like Constant le Boucher, a young Belgian, in five minutes. Petroff was an immensely strong Bulgarian. After defeating Constant, the French wrestlers put Peyrousse forward against me. This wrestler was tremendously powerful, but had little heart, so that hardly had we commenced struggling than he practically threw himself, greatly to the surprise of his compatriots, who had counted on his crushing me.

My second bout with him lasted only seven seconds. Following Peyrousse, I beat an enormously strong Cossack, Michailoff, whom I threw in ten minutes. While our championship matches in Moscow



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were still proceeding a great wrestling competition had already commenced in Vienna. Unfortunately I entered too late and did not reach Vienna until the final stages were in progress. My old opponent Pons took first prize. Kara Ahmed, a first-rate Turkish wrestler, was second, and the corpulent Laurent third. Neither Pons nor the Turk would consent to meet me. The good-natured Laurent alone was willing to wrestle a fall with me.

I first had a bout with a very tall and heavy Spaniard, Chorella, whom I threw in twenty-nine seconds. I had more trouble with a Dutchman, Dirk van den Berg, a finely built athlete. Van den Berg played a defensive game, looking out for some oversight on my part, but at length I defeated him in twenty-two minutes. I found an even more wily opponent in the German Fengler, who seemed a good-natured man and made all sorts of proposals to me before the contest, but once we set to work I found that he was only too anxious to beat me. I now began to realize that in order to win one requires *not only brute strength*, but must also employ in a far greater degree than the uninitiated would suppose, both judgment and reflection.

I threw Fengler in twenty-six minutes. The next day I wrestled with the doughty and corpulent Laurent le Beaucairois. We had a pretty lively set-to, and the Frenchman let it clearly be seen that he had no hope of beating me, for at the end of an hour he withdrew from the contest. Early in September I went to Dresden, the capital of Saxony, to attend a small wrestling competition. I was the chief attraction there, and wrestled almost nightly with from three to five opponents, nearly all of whom I defeated very quickly, e.g.:

Winzer of Hamburg in seven minutes.

The Austrian Burghardt in six minutes.

And the two nimble Italian brothers, Emilio and Giovanni Raicevich, in three and six minutes respectively, all in a single evening! I threw Fengler and Konietzko on another evening in three minutes altogether. At Dresden I met a very stout and heavy wrestler named Sebastian Miller. This worthy man weighed nearly 24st., and was fairly strong, but so deficient in science that I threw him in three minutes, and immediately afterwards a nimble but smaller Frenchman named Maurice Gambier, in five minutes, and Hitzler in twenty-three minutes. Hitzler had improved greatly. I took the first prize at Dresden.

From Dresden I went to Chemnitz, another Saxon town of somewhat less than a quarter of a million inhabitants. Here the contestants were: Gambier (France), Höfer (Germany), Seb Miller (Germany), Konietzko (Germany), Buisson (France), Hitzler (Germany), Winzer (Germany), Giovanni and Emilio Raicevich (Italy), Rossner (Germany), Petri (Holland), Oscar Uhlig (Germany), Burghardt (Austria), Diriks (Belgium) and myself. At

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Chemnitz, I, for the first time, met an old antagonist, Lurich. As often happens, the management of another theatre, in order to compete with our undertaking, had engaged Lurich and a number of other inferior wrestlers. Lurich went about boasting loudly that he had more than once defeated me with ease. His impressario billed Lurich as the *strongest man in the world* and "the invincible wrestler."

Though as a rule I had no great liking for impromptu challenges, yet in view of this continuous and brazen puffing of Lurich, I could not refrain from challenging him to a wrestling match when I found that he persisted in these wanton personal attacks upon me. Accordingly, Hitzler and I strolled round one evening to the theatre at which Lurich was engaged and offered to wrestle with him. Although Lurich had declared himself ready to meet any wrestler, amateur or professional, who chose to come forward, our challenge was not accepted, on the plea that the "invincible" had already his full quota of opponents. It was nevertheless announced from the stage that Herr Lurich would wrestle with Hackenschmidt on the following Wednesday.

On the appointed evening, we arrived punctually at the theatre, but we noticed that Lurich was already provided with two opponents. One of these, who seemed to be quite ignorant of wrestling, he threw in less than a minute. He then prepared to serve his second opponent in similar fashion when this latter suddenly vanished from the stage, crying out as he went. "Yonder stands Herr Hackenschmidt" (pointing to me), "he will take my place, as I don't feel well." I went on to the stage, amid thunderous applause from the crowded audience which had assembled, in order to wrestle with Lurich. But no sooner did the "invincible wrestler" catch sight of me than he turned deadly pale and bolted into the wings, and in spite of repeated calls, he absolutely declined to return.

My sole object in recording this unpleasant incident is to enable the English public to estimate at their true value the insinuations directed against me by a fellow countryman in the summer of 1904. We continued our tournament at Chemnitz undisturbed, and in addition to winning first prize I received a splendid ovation from the public, Hitzler and Gambier gaining second and third prizes respectively.

From Chemnitz I journey to Budapest, the beautiful capital of Hungary, where a wrestling contest had commenced on September 24. The participants were: Kara Ahmed (Turkey), Robinet (France), Muldoon (of America, but not the celebrated Physical Culturist), Charles (France), Krendel (Austria), Weber (Germany), Hitzler (Germany), Celestin Moret (France), Lassartesse (France), Ignace Nollys (Belgium), Albert de Paris (France), Giovanni Raicevich



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(Italy), Pibius (France), Burghardt (Austria), Mayer (Hungary), Sandorfi (Hungary), and Aimable (France), etc.

One of my first opponents was Robinet, who was a great favorite with the Budapest public, on the strength of his performances some years previously. I threw the Frenchman in eight minutes, and, later on in the competition, I defeated Albert de Paris, a very clever wrestler, in five minutes, Weber, of Germany, in two minutes, Aimable in twenty-five minutes, and Van den Berg in twenty-four minutes. My severest bout was with the Turk, Kara Ahmed, whom it took me nearly three hours to defeat. But never, while I live, shall I forget what then took place. The whole audience rose like one man, and thunders of applause echoed through the building. I was seized, carried shoulder high, and decked with flowers. For fully a quarter of an hour I was borne like a victorious general through the streets, kissed and embraced.

We left the hospitable walls of Budapest, and I next won the first prize at Graz, in Steiermark. None of the contests there were of great importance. At Graz I was pitted against the German athlete Rasso, an exceedingly powerful man, but no wrestler. I threw him as I pleased, clean and cleverly in five minutes, to the great surprise of the good people of Graz, who were familiar with Rasso's Herculean feats as an athlete.

Towards the end of October, I gained a first prize at Nurnberg, a prominent city of Bavaria, after which I returned to St. Petersburg, as my arm had again become almost useless owing to the continual strain to which it had been subjected. After eight weeks' rest, during which my arm underwent thorough treatment, my ambition again drove me to Paris in order to wrestle matches with Pons, Beaucairois, Constant, Van den Berg, and Aimable. I twice defeated Aimable, once in thirty-four and once in seventeen minutes. Van den Berg I threw in twenty-five and in three minutes.

My first bout with Constant was an hour draw, and then we wrestled for two hours and a quarter, I winning. Pons avoided meeting me. But Beaucairois, who must have known that I was suffering from a sharp attack of influenza, ventured to try his luck with me. I defeated him in twenty minutes, and then, in spite of my ailing condition, wrestled for an hour without result, and at the end of the day, in defiance of my doctor's advice, I again began to wrestle with the doughty Laurent. Half unconscious owing to the fever which coursed through my veins, after a struggle of twenty-three minutes, I fell a victim to a *bras roulé* of the Frenchman's. This was, strictly speaking, the first fall I had incurred in the course of my otherwise victorious career as a professional wrestler, and it was entirely due to my pride, since the Paris doctor called it inexcusable on my part to think of wrestling in such a condition!

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I had scarcely recovered when I had to fulfil an engagement in Hamburg, where the following wrestlers were engaged in a tournament: Max Nirsche (Berlin), Strenge (Berlin), Tom Clayton "Bulldog" (England), Joe Carroll (England), Lassartesse (France), Branken (Holland), Giovanni Raicevich (Italy), Celestin Moret (France), Weber (Germany), Saurer (Bavaria), G. Lurich Russia), Pietro le Belge Belgium), G. Semmel (Hamburg), Constant le Boucher (Belgium), G. Jeurisson (Belgium), Emil Bau (Germany), H. Landy (Holland), H. Oehlers (Hamburg), Kara Mustapha (Turkey), Clement le Terrassier (Belgium), Hitzler (Bavaria), Poirée (France), Kreindl (Austria), Peyrousse (France), Jess Pedersen (Denmark), Lemmertz (Germany), Winzer (Hamburg), Hassan Omer (Turkey), Orondi Steiermark), Dirk van den Berg (Holland), Diriks (Belgium), P. Belling (Berlin), H. Eberle (Germany), and Halil Adali, undoubtedly the best wrestler Turkey has ever produced. I first wrestled with some less important men, and then beat Orondi in ten seconds, Lemmertz in less than two minutes, Diriks in 1 min. 32 sec., and Belling in less than twenty minutes, Jess Pedersen (of Denmark) in twenty minutes, and Van den Berg.

I next engaged the German champion, Eberle, a strong and accomplished wrestler, who gave up the struggle at the end of twenty minutes. This did not please the audience, and led to a scene of wild disorder. The police were called in and they put a stop to the whole tournament. There was nothing left for us but to start for home, which I accordingly did without having wrestled with Halil Adali.

Towards the end of March another wrestling contest was held in St. Petersburg. Amongst others I defeated the strong and nimble French wrestler, Lassartesse, in twenty minutes and Petroff in seven minutes, by an arm-roll or *bras roulé,* obtaining the first prize, a gold medal.

At Easter of that year (1901) the wrestling contest for the championship of the world began in Vienna. This championship I consider the biggest I ever gained, since never before nor since has such a wonderful array of contestants been gathered together. There were from Germany Jacobus Koch, H. Eberle, Stark, Axa, Missbach and Hitzler; from Belgium Omer de Bouillon and Clement le Terrassier; from Holland Dirk van den Berg; from Italy G. Raicevich, Figini; from Turkey Kara Ahmed, Halil Adali, and Coord Derelli; from Denmark Jess Pedersen; from American John Pienning; from Austria Fränzel, Sporer, Kreindl and Sprecht; from France Paul Pons, Laurent le Beaucairois, Aimable de la Calmette, and a whole host of lesser lights. Among others I defeated Omer de Bouillon, a most excellent Belgian wrestler, in nine minutes, and Hitzler in twelve minutes. It was here that the small but nimble Bayer caused such general astonishment by throwing the gigantic



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Turk, Halil Adali (who was 6 ft. 2¼ in. in height and weighed 20st. 5lb.) in a minute and a half, taking him by surprise with a brilliant *bras roulé*.

I here made the acquaintance of a splendid German wrestler named Koch, who was, I think, the best German wrestler I have ever seen. He was very strong and decidedly clever, but did not do much in Vienna on this occasion as he was not in particularly good form. I threw him in twenty minutes. I had heard a great deal of the American wrestler Piening and recently he sought notoriety in England by appearing against me. But he, too, though an excellent, if not particularly powerful, wrestler, could do but little in Vienna.

Pons, Adali, Laurent, and I were rather too good for him. Piening I threw in thirty-one seconds, Beaucairois fell in forty-one minutes, and Pons, in spite of a stubborn defence, in seventy-nine minutes.

I had a pretty tough job with the tall Frenchman (6 ft. 4½ in. in height and weighing over 18 st.), and my victory was greeted with generous applause. The Turk Talil Adali, whom I consider the best of all my opponents, was even stronger than Pons. Adali possessed gigantic strength and staying power, but I was in pretty good form and drew on the first day after wrestling for an hour and eighteen minutes. Next day, after a contest of forty minutes, the Turk gave in, being convinced that I must win. Indeed, I had wrestled in first-rate form, and had reduced the good man to a somewhat demoralized condition. The results came out as follows: Hackenschmidt, 1; Adali, 2, and Pons, 3.

From Vienna I went to Stettin, where I took first prize in a minor contest. In the middle of May a great wrestling contest was held in Berlin, and a number of excellent wrestlers were engaged, Lurich among others. There were two classes in this contest: Lightweights (187 pounds and under), and Heavyweights (187 pounds and over). Consequently, on this occasion I did not meet Lurich, his weight at that time being 186 pounds. I was, however, somewhat astonished to find that on being matched against Piening (whom I threw in thirty-one seconds in Vienna), he twice wrestled with him for an hour, the result being a draw in each case!

I again threw Koch (in seven minutes), and several Berlin wrestlers in a few seconds, but in a contest with Pedersen, which I undertook by express desire of the management, I drew after a two hours' struggle. The whole contest was broken off owing to the failure of the management. The best wrestlers, including Petroff, Hitzler, Pohl, Pons, Pedersen, and myself, went on with the contest at the Metropole Theatre in Berlin. I now threw Hitzler in twenty-four, Petroff in thirty-one, and Pedersen in twenty-nine minutes.

The German, Pohl, who finished second, and was left in the final heat with Pons and myself, was a new opponent to me. Pohl

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was very strong and clever. He threw Pedersen in three minutes. I defeated him in thirteen minutes, after an indecisive struggle of one hour on the previous evening. The periodical, *Sport im Bild*, commented on this match, in which it was generally thought that Pohl would prove a dangerous opponent, as follows: "It was apparent from the very beginning of the final round (Hackenschmidt v. Pohl) that Hackenschmidt was in deadly earnest and anxious to bring matters to a crisis as soon as possible.

"Seizing Pohl around the body, he often endeavored to bring him to the ground, till at last he succeeded in doing so, though only at the cost of tremendous exertion. It then became clear that the Russian was resting for a moment and calling up a fresh reserve of strength, for he held Pohl motionless on the ground for some time. Then followed a sudden and violent *ceinture de côté*, from the left, to which Pohl nearly fell a victim. With one hand Hackenschmidt nearly jerked him on to his back. Then followed one or two *remassements* by means of which the Russian forced his opponent's head on to the ground, then another *ceinture*, which, however, failed to bring about the desired result. The struggle had lasted thirteen minutes, when Hackenschmidt at last secured the grip he so frequently employs with success.

"With his left hand he jerked Pohl so energetically that, in spite of his great weight (241 pounds), the Hamburg champion fell fair and square on both shoulders. The whole character of the contest—in which Hackenschmidt attacked throughout, while Pohl remained on the defensive—proved conclusively that the Russian is greatly his superior in strength."

I wrestled with Pons, but at the end of the bout the Frenchman retired; after being twice within an ace of defeat, he was unable to continue owing to an accident to his arm. I was awarded first prize amid deafening applause, and received a gigantic laurel wreath, nearly 6 ft. in diameter.

I spent a very pleasant time in Berlin and there made the acquaintance of the celebrated sculptor, Professor Reinhold Begas, who asked me to sit for him in the character of "Prometheus Vinctus." Professor Begas, a stately old man, who carried his seventy years well, took a great interest in wrestling, and was nearly always present during our contests.

I now returned home to rest and went through several courses of treatment for the benefit of my arm, the most successful of these being the Priessnitsch cold-water pack. The measurement of my biceps, which had decreased to 15¾ in., rose again to 17¾ in., and my weight went up from 202 to 216 pounds. After three months, in October, 1901, I was able to take up wrestling again in Moscow.

I was in excellent condition, and, among other victories, threw



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Lassartesse in seven minutes, Hitzler in twenty-one minutes, and the young Frenchman, Raoul le Boucher, a very powerful, young, heavy and skilful wrestler (6 ft. 2¼ in. in height and weighing 19 st. 9 lb.), in twenty-three minutes in spite of a furious resistance on his part. I threw five excellent Moscow amateurs in seven minutes! This last *tour de force* I repeated shortly afterwards—at the end of October—in Munich, where I defeated five professional wrestlers also in seven minutes. After which, among others, I beat Burghardt (Austria) in six minutes, Cassino (France) in thirty seconds, Hitzler in twenty-three minutes, Rödel in twenty-seven seconds, Blätte (of Munich) in two and a half minutes, Eigemann (from Elberfeld) in less than one minute, Marchand (the Frenchman) in two minutes, and Koch in twenty-five minutes.

The promoters next matched me for the second time against the German champion, Eberle, who was now in better form than he had been at Hamburg. I was prepared for a fairly long struggle, in the event of his adopting defensive tactics, but to my surprise Eberle took the offensive against me. I gave him an opportunity of taking the lower hold from behind, and as I tightened this by a sturdy swing of the leg, I got him off his balance. He fell and I turned him quickly on his back. The whole contest, to the astonishment of every one, and especially of Eberle himself, only lasted five minutes.

On November 30, 1901, a contest for the wrestling championship of the world was commenced at the *Casino de Paris*. I had entered for this, and before it commenced, at an independent performance, I threw five professional wrestlers in six minutes altogether. For this tournament some hundred and thirty wrestlers had entered, and among others I defeated Mario in three and Buisson in three and three-quarter minutes. My first important adversary was Alexandre le Marseillais, a tall and heavy (249 pounder) but none the less accomplished wrestler, whom I threw after a severe struggle of twenty minutes. I wrestled for one hour without result with Omer de Bouillon, who was in excellent form, but defeated him on the following day in twenty minutes.

I now threw Koch in twenty minutes, Maurice Gambier, in a short two minutes, Emile Vervet in six minutes, and the Frenchman, Raoul le Boucher, in twenty-one minutes.

Raoul wrestled somewhat savagely, but this did not avail him much, as I turned him with a "half-nelson," and got both his shoulders on the ground. At last my time came to wrestle with the celebrated Belgian, Constant le Boucher, in the final contest.

On this particular evening I happened to be in good form and as cool as ice. I got a splendid grip, and, to the general surprise of all, contrived to throw the Belgian after only eight minutes' wrestling.

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Stanislaus Zbyszko, the sturdy Pole, as he looked when he made his American debut in 1909.


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Ed "Strangler" Lewis, and his headlock invention.

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Big Wayne Munn, the Nebraska Giant, a collegian who won the world crown.


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Jim Londos, the Greek Adonis, one of the best all-around wrestlers in modern times.

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This was on December 19, 1901. I received a magnificent ovation, and the newspapers devoted whole columns of space to me.

On December 27 I wrestled once more with Constant, and was declared the winner after a long struggle.

Early in the year 1902, I came over to England with the object of pitting myself against any opponent I could find.

For a long time this was not practicable, for just then the English public took but scant interest in wrestling, or, at any rate, in the Graeco-Roman branch of the Art, since few first-class opponents of this system had as yet visited Great Britain.

About this time an American wrestler named Carkeek made his appearance in London. I had known this man in France as an average grappler. He was about forty years of age, and claimed, among other things, to have defeated Beaucairois, Gambier, and Pytlasinski.

I sent more than one challenge to his manager, and also to Carkeek himself, but they were invariably refused. I was on the point of leaving England when it came to my knowledge that Carkeek, believing me to have already gone, had challenged any professional wrestler then in London to wrestle with him either in the Graeco-Roman, "Catch-as-catch-can," or Cornish styles, and would be sure to make a big advertisement out of my departure. I therefore purchased a box close to the stage (of the Alhambra), and as soon as Carkeek had finished his challenge, I sprang, accompanied by Mr. Vansittart, the famous athlete, known as "The Man with the Grip of Iron," on to the stage in full wrestling costume, while my companion, holding a stake of £25 in his hand, challenged Carkeek to wrestle with me, and undertook to hand over the sum he held if I failed to throw Carkeek at least *ten times within an hour*.

A tremendous uproar ensued. Though the audience took our part, we were compelled to leave the stage by the police. On the following day I lodged £25 with the editor of the *Sportsman* on the conditions already announced from the stage. All the newspapers gave favorable notices of my *début*, and on March 10 I received an engagement at the Tivoli Theatre, London. For some time my health suffered from a climate to which I was unaccustomed, but I nevertheless accepted further engagements, which were freely offered me.

In order to have a useful opponent for training purposes, I summoned my friend Koch from Germany, and we wrestled together almost every day for practice, wrestling continually for some months and defeating all opponents. Then I made the acquaintance of Tom Cannon, the well-known wrestler, who lived in Liverpool, and only wrestled occasionally.

At the end of July, Koch and I left England for the Continent and engaged in tournaments at Brussels, Liége, Namur and other places,



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in all of which I won the first prize, Koch generally succeeding in winning the second.

I then went back to England in order to wrestle a match with the renowned veteran, Tom Cannon. This took place on September 27, 1902, at Liverpool, and lasted thirty-three minutes. The English champion, though now somewhat of a veteran, had had a very wide and exceptional experience, and was able to bring into play some very skilful, if somewhat painful, moves, which he had picked up from Turkish wrestlers. I managed, however, to secure a hammer-lock and Cannon succumbed.

Not satisfied with this result, Cannon, after staying out a fifteen minute "limit" contest, made another match "to a finish" with me, which I won fairly easily.

This success, though not a very arduous one for me, was generally regarded as a great feather in my cap, and I received a number of excellent engagements to wrestle in England and Scotland in consequence.

I entered my name for the Gold Belt contest in Paris (November, 1902), but they sought to impose a number of peddling counter proposals, to which I could not see my way to consent, a result which seemed to be highly acceptable to the Paris authorities, as it was apparently intended that the favorite, Pons, whom I had already thrice defeated, should win. I did not regret this, as Pons is a first-rate man.

After this I toured all over England, being successful against every wrestler who accepted my challenge to all comers.

In 1903 I met and defeated the following wrestlers, Tom Cannon, Tom Connors, Tom MacInerney and Tom Clayton. I threw all of them, but was unfortunately laid up with an attack of rheumatism brought on by the damp climate of Glasgow, which prevented my taking part in the contest for the Championship of the World in Paris. In this contest Pedersen was first and Raoul de Boucher second, both of whom I had previously defeated.

Owing to the fact that the "Catch-as-catch-can" style of wrestling is the more usual and favorite method in England, I was frequently obliged to wrestle with my opponents in this method, but, thanks to my strength and presence of mind, I always came off the conqueror. I very often trained specially for this style with Jack Smith of Manchester, a very clever wrestler.

In September, 1903, I wrestled with Bech Olsen, who had, however, no claims to be considered a first-class wrestler. The contest, however, came to an unsatisfactory termination, as, owing to an accident to my ankle, the match had to be discontinued.

On the strength of this, Antonio Pieri, "the terrible Greek," challenged me to wrestle with him, hoping that I would fall an easy

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victim. The match came off about the middle of October at the Oxford Music Hall, in London, and I threw this very experienced and—in spite of his years—very dangerous adversary, in twenty-five minutes. Pieri challenged me to a return match to be decided by one fall under Graeco-Roman, and one under "Catch-as-catch-can" rules. We met on November 21, and in the first bout (Graeco-Roman) I beat him in 17 min., 11 sec. by means of a "half-nelson," and in the second bout, which followed immediately after, in "Catch-as-catch-can" style, I threw him in 15 min., 25 sec.

Smarting under his defeat, Pieri set himself to work to unearth a wrestler who could beat me. And before very long he introduced to the British public a Turk named Ahmed Madrali, a man of gigantic strength, who was boomed in every possible manner, as being a better man than myself. At first I paid but little attention to these attacks, as I had a great many excellent engagements in London and in many other large English towns, where I defeated every one who came into the ring against me. At last, however, I took up his challenge, and we met on January 30, 1904, at Olympia in London, the winning of two falls out of three to decide the match, the Turk being 6 ft. 1 in. in height and weighing 16st. A huge audience had assembled when the Turk entered the ring with Antonio Pieri, whilst I was accompanied by Koch. The contest, as will be remembered, was a very brief one, as on Madrali making a move for my waist, I dashed in and lifting him off his feet, threw him on to his shoulders. Unfortunately, he fell on his arm, and, as this was dislocated, he was unable to continue the contest, but luckily was able to begin wrestling again three months later.

This victory raised my reputation to its zenith, and since that time I do not think that I have had a wrestling rival in the affections or esteem of the British public.

There is no need for me to enter into any description of the troubles, legal and otherwise, connected with my next big encounter. They were far from being pleasant to either Jenkins or myself, but since neither of us wished to disappoint the public, we readily agreed to the final makeshift arrangements and met on the mat before 6,000 people at the Albert Hall on July 2, 1904. I early on succeeded in getting "behind" the American champion, but after a five minutes' struggle he succeeded in breaking loose. Three times afterwards I threw him on the mat, but he managed to wriggle out of a fall. Jenkins struggled hard and displayed very good defensive tactics, but was forced finally to succumb to a "half-nelson" after 20 min., 37 sec. wrestling. After fifteen minutes' interval Jenkins opened the second bout with an aggressive movement, and for some little time we had a stand-up struggle. Again we went to the mat, where, in



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spite of his utmost efforts, I finally managed to pin him out after 14 min., 27 sec.

The *Sportsman* report of this match read as follows:

"It was ten o'clock before the rivals appeared on the platform. By this time the spectators were in a high state of enthusiasm and gave the men a ringing cheer. Taking stock of the two men, it was clear that Hackenschmidt had the advantage, physically speaking, at every turn. He looked a stone and a half heavier, deeper and more solid about the chest, more firmly set on the limbs, and to have nearly twice the muscular development of the American. Jenkins is a strongly-built man, but he did not appear half so fit as his opponent, carrying too much flesh. For all that, he made a creditable show, and gave one the impression of being a man of real grit, resource and stamina.

"When the men got to grips, Hackenschmidt attacked in decisive style, and twice just missed with the flying mare. In less than three minutes he fixed his rival in a cruel body grip and swung him over on to the stage. Jenkins endeavored to spring forward on to his feet, but Hackenschmidt's arms shot out like lightning, and he pulled his man down with the greatest ease. The American defended very cleverly, and, failing to find an opening for an arm-hold, the Russian picked his opponent up with the intention of pitching him over his back.

"Tom Jenkins smartly eluded his grip, and after six minutes both were on their feet. Hackenschmidt was forcing the pace at a terrific rate, and three times lifted his man up and brought him to the boards with a magnificent display of strength, but it availed nothing against the American's skilful defence. Again Hackenschmidt attempted the flying mare, but his hand slipped on his opponent's neck, and like a flash Jenkins gripped the Russian by the waist and had him down.

"The wrestling was now more even, and each man attacked in turn. The strength and science which the challenger exhibited were a complete revelation, and he kept his opponent at bay without much difficulty. When a quarter of an hour had gone, Hackenschmidt rushed in and swung Jenkins bodily round the stage, describing three circles before he threw him to the boards, but the American once more eluded his grip like an eel. Then the Russian braced himself for a big effort. Twice he twisted Jenkins over on to one shoulder, and just as promptly did Jenkins, with a mighty contraction of his neck and shoulder muscles, snap the holds. At this point Jenkins mysteriously weakened. Hackenschmidt bore down on him with the power of a Hercules, and with a pedal action similar to a man pushing a heavy roller up a hill, forced his man over on his back, and with an irresistible "half-nelson" gained the first fall in 20 min., 37 sec.

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"In the second bout Hackenschmidt did most of the attacking, but Jenkins again put up a wonderfully plucky and skilful defence. Once the latter forgot himself and the rules by employing the leg-hold, but Hackenschmidt appeared quite unruffled by an act which ought to have been penalized by disqualification. Minute after minute sped by, but Jenkins could put on nothing more dangerous than a back-of-the-neck hold in answer to the Russian's arm-hold. Then Hackenschmidt brought the "half-nelson" into play, but when Jenkins seemed in hopeless plight he extricated himself by a magnificent feat of wrestling, subtlety that evoked a tremendous storm of cheering.

It proved his last expiring effort, however, for before he had quite recovered from the exhaustion which the struggle had engendered, the Russian had cleverly slipped on a second "half-nelson," and Jenkins was placed squarely on his shoulders in 14 min., 27 sec. Jenkins is to be congratulated on his plucky fight and his fine display of wrestling. The cheer which he received after his defeat was quite as hearty as that accorded Hackenschmidt."

Leaving England in September, 1904, I set out for a four months' tour in the Antipodes. My first experiences of Australia were unfortunately by no means as pleasant as they might have been, for a had to go into hospital very soon after my arrival in Sydney. I was not able to fulfil any of my engagements for quite five weeks, owing to both my arm and my knee again giving way. I was suffering from what are commonly called a housemaid's knee and a miner's elbow, which means water on both joints, necessitating an operation.

This was successful, and I was able to get to work, touring through all the principal towns and meeting all the wrestlers of note whom I could come across. Prior to my arrival in the Southern Continent, the two wrestlers who had enjoyed the biggest reputations were two big Hindus, Buttan Singh and Gunga Brahm. Both of these were fine big men, with plenty of strength and considerable skill, yet I threw the pair of them in nine minutes on the same night.

Clarence Weber, however, the Champion All-round Athlete of Australia, a most splendidly built young fellow, managed to hold out for ten minutes on more than one occasion. I may say, though, that I did not make any special preparation for either of these encounters, and owing, of course, to my having to wrestle different opponents nearly every night, I was naturally a bit weary and lacking in fire and vigor.

As Graeco-Roman wrestling was not well understood in Australia, I found it occasionally difficult to fix up matters with the various opponents who presented themselves and was in consequence compelled to devote my attention seriously to the study of the "Catch-as-catch-can" style. This was an important stage in my career and, considering that I was practically staking all my hard-earned repu-



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tation on my prospects of success under these new and comparatively strange rules, a somewhat risky step to contemplate. Nevertheless I accepted the situation, and can sincerely acknowledge that I have never regretted having done so.

After a fairly considerable experience, I may now confess that I distinctly preferred the more open method, and did not again propose deserting "catch-as-catch-can." I did indeed make publicly a declaration of my determination never to wrestle under Graeco-Roman rules again.

By-the-way, on one occasion while in Australia, I was challenged to wrestle in the Cornish style of wrestling, in which a fall is secured only when a wrestler is thrown on any three points, viz., both shoulders and one hip, or both hips and a shoulder touch the ground. All bouts are contested from a standing position, and a hold is secured on the jacket which each contestant has to wear.

My challenger, Delhi Nielsen, who was an experienced Cornish wrestler, may perhaps have imagined that at this style (to which I was quite unaccustomed) he might very probably enjoy a comparatively even chance with me. Having defeated over 400 opponents and possessing an untarnished record, he was, in fact, very confident.

He consequently refused to wrestle with me, save under these conditions, and I was compelled to agree to his terms, trusting that my acquaintance with the Russian style of wrestling, with waist-belts (between which and the Cornish style there is a very faint resemblance, although tripping is prohibited under the Russian rules), might stand me in good stead.

Be that is it may, I was able to rise to the occasion and to throw him very easily.

Having completed my Australian engagements, during the course of which I defeated Grotz, who was called the Champion of South Africa, and several other prominent wrestlers and physical culturists, I paid a brief visit to New Zealand, and then sailed for America, where I was booked for several engagements, the most important of all being my return match with Tom Jenkins, the American champion, whom I had defeated under Graeco-Roman rules at the Albert Hall on July 2, 1904.

On my way across the Pacific, I made a brief stay at the island of Samoa, and can well understand the enthusiasm with which travellers in the South Seas always refer to those havens of bliss, the islands of Polynesia.

I had promised to meet Jenkins in this return encounter in New York, after the London contest, and now agreed that our second meeting should be under "Catch-as-catch-can" rules, with which my opponent was more familiar, but at which style I had but little ex-

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perience, save for an occasional encounter in England and more frequently during my Australian tour.

This match with Jenkins, however, was the first big one in which I had engaged entirely under "Catch-as-catch-can" rules, and considerable interest was perhaps, naturally felt throughout America on this account.

Jenkins and I met before a huge crowd at the Madison Square Gardens, New York, on May 4, 1905, our respective weights being as follows: Jenkins 14 st. 4 lb. and my own 14 st. 12 lb.

I was not yet sufficiently versed in the style at which we were wrestling to forestall the clever leg-locks and holds by which my opponent contrived to postpone disaster. He was mostly on the defensive, wriggling and extricating himself from difficulties in a very able manner, but despite a very strenuous struggle and a determined bridge, I finally managed to lever him over and pin him down in 31 min., 14 sec.

He seemed very exhausted, but recovered well, and exhibited considerable liveliness when we met for the second bout. He secured a "half-nelson" and a crotch-hold, and several times initiated an attack, but I did not experience much difficulty in breaking clear from the holds he managed to secure. I gradually wore him down, and, finally fixing a "half-nelson," forced him over despite his struggles, pinning him down for the second time in 22 min., 4 sec.

Despite the strenuous nature of this match, I felt very little fatigue or exhaustion afterwards, thanks to my excellent condition. I was able to demonstrate this on the following evening, when I was matched to throw half-a-dozen wrestlers of considerable local prominence under Graeco-Roman rules. This was a fairly stiff contract, but I managed to dispose of the whole half-dozen inside eighteen minutes.

James Parr, the old Lancashire wrestler, then challenged me to throw him the next evening, offering to resist being thrown three times within the hour. He was, of course, giving a fair amount of weight, but as he is a very skilful wrestler I consider that I did not do at all badly by pinning him down three times in 7 min., 50 sec.

During my tour in the States I had a rather amusing experience in St. Louis. I was there matched against Jean Baptiste, who was the champion wrestler of the district.

As soon as the match was arranged I was attacked by malarial fever, and, consulting a doctor, was ordered to bed, where I speedily became much worse, my temperature rising as high as 105 degrees.

Under these circumstances, and especially as the doctor considered my condition to be highly critical, I sent to the match promoters and informed them that it would be impossible for me to fulfil my engagement on the date agreed but they pleaded with me, and I de-



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cided to go through with it and even in my weakness, which no one but my doctor and the promoters were aware of, I won easily.

After finishing my engagements in the States, I paid a visit to Canada, where I threw such opponents as I could meet with. The most formidable of these was the celebrated French-Canadian, Emile Maupas, a strong and clever wrestler. He was an adept at the reversed body hold, which he tried on with me, but barely succeeded in lifting me from the mat, then losing his balance and falling backwards. I threw him three times in less than twenty-one and a half minutes, the first fall occupying 7 min., 39 sec., the second 6 min., 19 sec., and the third 7 min., 20 sec.

After visiting the Falls of Niagara, and doing a little sightseeing, I again set sail for England, where I was booked to appear for a week in Manchester, before appearing at the Canterbury Music Hall on Whit-Monday.

Back again in the British Isles with a long list of music-hall engagements before me and having anticipations of a prospective match with Alexander Munro (the Scottish champion) and a possible return encounter with Madrali, it was quite clear that on these occasions my opponents would stipulate for "Catch-as-catch-can" conditions, and that it would be advisable for me to accustom myself thoroughly to that style of wrestling.

I therefore resolved that, at all events for the time being, I would only engage in contests or exhibitions under that code, more especially as there can be no doubt of its greater popularity among the British people. Several months elapsed before the conditions could be arranged for my encounter with Munro, and meanwhile I had my music-hall engagements to fulfil, but finally, on October 28, 1905, I encountered the British champion before 16,000 spectators on the Glasgow Rangers' Football Ground, at Ibrox Park. The greatest interest was evinced in the encounter on account of my antagonist's magnificent physique and great reputation. My readers may, perhaps, be interested in comparing our respective weights and measurements on that occasion:

| Munro | | Hackenschmidt |
|---|---|---|
| 6 ft. | Height | 5 ft. 9½ in. |
| 15 st. 5 lb. | Weight | 14 st. 8 lb. |
| 18½ in. | Neck | 22 in. |
| 48 in. | Chest | 52 in. |
| 36 in. | Waist | 34 in. |
| 27 in. | Thigh | 26¾ in. |
| 17 in. | Calf | 18 in. |
| 14½ in. | Forearm | 15½ in. |
| 17¾ in. | Biceps | 19 in. |

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A drizzling rain which fell throughout the contest somewhat hampered my movements, and since I was the attacking party during most of the time the conditions naturally handicapped me more seriously than my adversary. Munro was the first to go to the mat, and was soon compelled to "bridge" for safety. I turned him over with a leg hold, but he managed to slip clear, as he also did out of several "half-nelsons." Indeed, after about a quarter of an hour's struggle he managed so to extricate himself from my grasp as to be able to put in several aggressive movements. He was, and is undoubtedly, a very powerful man, and did not finally succumb (to a "half-nelson") until after a struggle lasting altogether 22 min., 40 sec.

After ten minutes' interval we commenced the second bout and again Munro displayed fine defensive tactics, once or twice even assuming the offensive. Again, however, I got him with a "half-nelson" and rolled him over in 11 min., 11 sec.

That night, on appearing to fulfil my engagement at the Palace Theatre, just outside Glasgow, the audience called for a speech, and after my saying a few words they stood up as one man and gave me one of the biggest ovations I had ever experienced in Great Britain. The kindly enthusiasm with which they acclaimed me as "a jolly good fellow" was such as I shall never forget, for the rest of my life.

My music-hall engagements, together with an occasional brief holiday, occupied me now for the next six months, when, in order to satisfy Madrali, Pieri, the British public and myself that the result of our first encounter was not, as Pieri alleged, "a fluke," I consented to again meet the "Terrible Turk" under "Catch-as-catch-can" rules on this occasion. At this style of wrestling he was, according to his mentor and discoverer "absolutely invincible," and on the strength of recent encounters with Tom Jenkins and Alex Munro, a not inconsiderable section of the public inclined to the opinion that he would "make me travel." Even I myself had but little confidence in my chance, consequently I trained seriously for the occasion, putting in a fortnight's preparation at dear old Jack Grumley's house, "The Seven Stars," Shepherd's Bush. I had practice bouts regularly with one or other of the following very capable group of wrestlers: Jack Smith, "Gunner" Moir, poor Jack Grumley, John Strong, Gus Rennart, and Constables Barrett and Humphreys of the City Police, and to wind up, I took them all to Worthing and finished my training there.

One daily item of my training may deserve mention here, since in itself it was no small feat and, graduated according to circumstances, might be included with advantage in every wrestler's preparation. I used to kneel down while the others placed a sack of cement weighing six hundred-weight on my back, and as soon as this was comfortably settled, poor Jack Grumley, who scaled another 232 lbs., seated him-



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self thereon, say, well, over 900 lbs. in all. No small weight-moving feat I can assure you!

Under these circumstances, therefore, it can be well understood that I was feeling particularly fit and well when for the second occasion I faced Madrali at Olympia.

As this contest was brought about after a tremendously wordy discussion in the Press and amidst the greatest possible excitement, it may, perhaps, interest my readers if I quote the report which appeared in The *Manchester Guardian* and ran as follows:

"Hackenschmidt and Madrali, surrounded by their friends and seconds, were early in their dressing rooms. Madrali was reported marvellously fit but a whisper flew round, among the journalists, telling the alarming tale that Hackenschmidt was sick! His stomach was wrong! They were anointing him with alcohol! He was faint! He was trembling. Part of it was true. Sheer excitement had upset the Russian, and betting began to veer, and the odds weakened just as they do on the morning of a big race, when the favorite is reported to be coughing. Strung to a higher pitch of excitement by this 'stable intelligence,' the crowd watched and waited hungrily for the appearance of the two mighty men. It was nearly half-past nine before the band played with great gusto, 'See the conquering hero comes!' There was a sudden eddy among the group of privileged persons at the side of the ring, the eddy broke and through it strode Madrali. Olympia howled as one man. The Turk stalked on to the stage like a ghost in a dream. He looked immense—passionless and colorless; a black overcoat covered him from throat to ankles.

"He walked to his corner like an automaton and sat down on a kitchen chair. At the tail end of the cheers which greeted him came Hackenschmidt, in a brown dressing-gown, with tassels flapping dolorously. With his wonderful shoulders concealed by the wrappings of his gown, he appeared small and puny compared with the great mass of humanity opposite him. His face—frank and boyish as a rule—was the very picture of misery. It was drab and drawn and withered. His lips were trembling and his eyes were flashing furtive glances across the great auditorium, whilst the cheers hurtled among the rafters of the glass dome. . . .

"At the call of 'time,' and in a silence through which one little cough broke like a rifle shot, the Turk and the Russian leaped like cats to the mat. And at that moment life and confidence came back to Hackenschmidt, whose apparent collapse was nothing more than tremendous excitement worked up to a pitch almost heartbreaking.

"He knew that in the 'Catch-as-catch-can' style Madrali was cunning and relentless if he could only get time—time to wear his man down and to grind the spirit out of him. And Hackenschmidt's one idea was to limit the time to a mere handful of seconds, if he only could,

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and not save himself for an endurance test. After a few lightning flashes of preliminary sparring the Russian jumped in for a neck hold and got Madrali's head down. But Madrali weaved his arms round Hackenschmidt's waist and hugged and tugged until his opponent bent nearly double. Hackenschmidt made a wild grab at the Turk's neck and got a hold which was near enough to the 'strangle grip' to cause Madrali to squirm away and protest, mumbling to the referee as he explained in pantomimic passes with his hands.

"In another moment the mat stars were at it again, crouching like tigers for a spring. And here Madrali made his first bad mistake. He tried his favorite dodge—a sudden spring to get a leg hold. But Hackenschmidt, sharp as a needle, was on the look-out for that. He hopped back an inch and no more, Madrali's hand smote the air and the impetus of his fruitless grab upset his balance. His right arm went up to steady himself, and like an arrow, the Russian leaped in, took his man under that right arm and swung him around.

"Down with a thud and a grunt went Madrali, the Turk. Hackenschmidt was on him, and Madrali went over in a body-roll, which no power on earth could stop. There was one wild struggle, a helpless kick or two, and Madrali was pinned to the carpet in a fair and straight throw in 1 min., 34 sec. Madrali staggered up, shook himself, and stalked back to his corner, while in a storm of cheers Hackenschmidt, pale as death but smiling, slipped on his dressing-gown and departed to his dressing room for the fifteen minutes' interval. Madrali stayed where he was, solacing himself with a rough towel.

"For the second bout the Russian was a raging favorite. And lo! in the second bout Madrali found his haven. Twice he dived for the leg hold. Twice he got it, being craftier this time, after his first stinging lesson in carelessness. Twice Hackenschmidt broke away.

"And then in a whirl of heaving flash both men came to earth with a bump. Madrali was on top. He wriggled behind the Russian and wrapped his sinewy arms round his waist. Hackenschmidt crouched on all fours, while Madrali kneaded him remorselessly—a painful process which has churned many a great wrestler into sickness and partial unconsciousness. A minute or so of this set the Russian sweating. His white skin glistened in the blaze of the electric light. His face was twisted with pain. And still the inexorable Turk gruelled and gruelled his opponent. Thinking, no doubt, he had weakened him sufficiently, he made a grab at his ankle. That did not come off, so Madrali ground his knee into the Russian's thigh.

"This was not strictly cricket, and Mr. Dunning promptly stopped it. Hackenschmidt just watched for his chance. It came with startling



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suddenness. Incautiously Madrali loosed his waist hold and tried a 'half-nelson' on the Russian's right arm, but found it too strong even for his muscles, whereupon Hackenschmidt got a left wrist hold and a leg-lock simultaneously, strained the mighty muscles of his shoulders almost to bursting-point and with a heave which showed incredible strength hurled his man clean over. The crowd went mad with excitement. 'He's got him! He's got him!' they yelled. He had. Fiercely, furiously, panting and straining Hackenschmidt flung his whole weight upon the prostrate Turk. It was the biggest effort he had ever made. For a breathless moment Madrali struggled.

"Then he collapsed and Mr. Dunning smote Hackenschmidt upon the shoulders with a sounding slap which signalized that the championship had been won and that the terrible Turk had been beaten. 'Time, four minutes,' cried Mr. Mansell, the timekeeper, and like an avalanche, the crowd swarmed, roaring into the arena."

I was now booked up for a lengthy tour, during which I visited nearly every town in the United Kingdom, meeting all the wrestlers of repute in every locality, without coming across any serious or exciting encounter.

In August, 1907, my old knee trouble again made its appearance, but this time the water gathered in the joint itself, so that my knee cap stood away from the joint quite a quarter of an inch. By medical advice I now always wore a bandage, and found it practically impossible to do any serious wrestling practice. Even a slow trot caused me such pain that I could only fulfil my ordinary engagements with the utmost difficulty.

Matters in the Wrestling World were livened up, however, by the visit of three wrestlers possessing formidable reputations on the Continent.

First came Constant le Marin, then the Galician wrestler, Cyganiewicz, or Zbyszko. Finally came the big Cossack, Padoubny, the winner of World's Championship Tournaments in the Graeco-Roman style.

These were followed by Joe Rogers, a big American wrestler, with whom I had wrestled in New York, but who had since progressed considerably in his knowledge of the game.

All four of these hurled challenges at me, but as I found that Constant le Marin, who had been first in the field, appeared less ready to come to business than he had been to announce his readiness therefor, and as it would have been absurd to match myself to meet them all at once or to lay myself open to their accusations, if I accorded either of them precedence, I suggested that they had better wrestle among themselves, promising to meet the winner.

Knowing full well that they were all formidable opponents, and feeling the urgent need of rest and recuperation after my long and

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arduous spell of work, I now took a brief holiday, paying a visit to my home in Russia.

Unfortunately I did not find the rest or cure I needed, and consequently returned to England feeling far from fit and well, in time to witness the Zbyszko-Poddubny match, to which the proposed tournament had dwindled down.

This, as may be remembered, resulted in the victory of Zbyszko, owing to the disqualification of Poddubny, and I accordingly signed articles to meet the winner.

Meanwhile Rogers, who had been unable to enter the proposed tournament or triangular contest, owing to a poisoned thumb, was clamoring for a match with me, on the plea that I had promised to meet him while I was in America, if he took up wrestling seriously and was able to prove that he was a serious opponent.

This he had done by virtue of his success in one or two American tournaments in which he had defeated some very formidable opponents and so I consented to meet him.

We came together at the Oxford Music Hall on February 6, 1908, and, despite his great advantage in height and weight (he was quite six inches taller and more than three stone heavier than I was), I did not experience any very great difficulty in pinning him out twice in 7 min., 35 sec. and 6 min., 45 sec., respectively.

I was attacking practically throughout the contest, almost the only aggressive move which he made being an attempt to seize me round the thighs, which resulted in his being thrown for the first time, as I stooped also and quicker than he did, securing a hold just below his knees, lifting him and then pitching him forcibly to the ground, after which I was able to pin him down without much difficulty.

I then sailed to America to fulfil my contract to wrestle Frank Gotch. Prior to the contest itself I fulfilled a night's engagement at the Grand Central Palace, New York, meeting Neil Olsen a quick little wrestler who called himself Young Hackenschmidt, and Steg-Miller, whom I took with me to America. After this I went to Boston, where I wrestled John Perelli, Albert Ouvray and several others and had the honor of making the acquaintance of the son of President Roosevelt, who introduced me to his friends.

From Boston I went to Philadelphia, and there beat Carl Darschn of Camden, in 3¾ min., Henry Paulson in 5 min., 9 sec., and Miller. Then I went to Washington, where I was introduced to President Roosevelt at the White House, and to several other leading politicians. There I wrestled five opponents, and threw them all pretty quickly; travelling thence to Baltimore, where, after defeating two or three opponents, I wrestled 15 min. with Gus Schönlein (America). From here I went straight to Chicago to get ready for Gotch.

As to the contest itself so much has been said and written already



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by various eye-witnesses and also by people who were not eye-witnesses, that it seems to me that I should be serving no useful purpose by either adding to or taking from the remarks I have already made on the subject.

Throughout my whole career I have never bothered as to whether I was a champion or not a champion. The only title I have desired to be known by is simply my name, George Hackenschmidt.

The measurements of Gotch and Hackenschmidt for their 1911 match and the financial returns of the bout, follow:

| GOTCH | | HACKENSCHMIDT |
|---|---|---|
| German-American | Nationality | German-Swedish |
| Humboldt, Iowa | Birthplace | Durbat, Russia |
| 33 years | Age | 35 years |
| 204 pounds | Weight | 225 pounds |
| 5 ft. 11 in. | Height | 5 ft. 9½ in. |
| 73 in. | Reach | 75 in. |
| 17½ in. | Biceps | 20 in. |
| 14 in. | Forearm | 16½ in. |
| 18 in. | Neck | 23 in. |
| 45 in. | Chest | 52½ in. |
| 34 in. | Waist | 39 in. |
| 22 in. | Thigh | 28 in. |
| 18 in. | Calf | 20 in. |

Winner—Gotch in straight falls. Total time, 19:50.

Place—White Sox Ball Park, Chicago, Ill.

Referee—Ed. W. Smith.

Date—September 4, 1911.

Gate receipts—$87,053 at $1 to $10, biggest up to that time.

Promoters—Empire Athletic Club (Jack Curley, Izzy Herk, Joe Coffey and Silvie Ferretti).

Gotch's share—$21,000 guaranteed and 50 per cent of moving pictures.

Hackenschmidt's share—70% over $25,000 and 25% of the pictures, originally, but he sold out in advance to Curley for $13,500.

Curley's share—$29,937.

Club's share—$18,616.

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Chapter XVII

# Stecher Reaches Top

IT will be remembered that when Frank Gotch retired as heavyweight champion of the world, taking a leaf from the Jeffries book, he decided he would do as did the Boilermaker when Jeff retired—pass the title along to a friend. He figured he had ring precedent in the action of the Californian and in other such cases in boxing, and he remarked: "If they can get away with that in boxing, why not in wrestling? I pass my crown in wrestling on to Jesse Westergaard." But he stipulated that Jesse would have to defeat Henry Ordeman, his challenger, to be generally recognized. Thus the match, as previously stated, was arranged and, much to the surprise and embarrassment of Gotch, his protégé, Westergaard, was defeated, and Ordeman became the champion.

However, as in boxing, the public refused to recognize him as titleholder, because there were many better wrestlers than Ordeman in the field, and the fans insisted that only the surviver of an elimination tourney would be hailed as Gotch's successor. Thus, Charles Kid Cutler, a wrestler of ability, who had made his mark in the heavyweight ranks, was picked as the logical opponent for Ordeman in a bout to decide the championship and, in a match in which Ordeman was tossed twice in thirty-seven minutes in Minneapolis in 1914, Cutler became the undisputed crown wearer. Cutler is now living in Chicago.

But Cutler's reign was short, as he was thrown by Dr. Roller, a young University of Pennsylvania football star and matman, and the title for a time seesawed between them, as they engaged in three bouts. Cutler won two of these matches and between July, 1914, and July 4, 1915, he twice held the crown.

Both Dr. Roller and Cutler were splendid wrestlers, but they failed to rank in the same class with Hackenschmidt and Gotch. Dr. Roller's reign as catch-as-catch-can champion was short and included titular bouts only with Cutler.

When Gotch gave up his title and Cutler won it from the man whom Frank had designated as his successor, Cutler's claim to world honors was a questionable one. In that respect, he held a "synthetic title," the same as do others in this era of complications.

But when Cutler was matched with Joe Stecher, the young Nebraskan, the critics accepted that contest as for the world title. And, when Joe won the match, he was acclaimed throughout the world. Thus the championship again had an undisputed king, a man who was to rule on and off for some time.




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The climb from obscurity to fame, in any of the more strenuous sports, is usually tortuous and attended by pain and sorrow, but Stecher accomplished it almost overnight by the discovery of the body-scissors hold, the first really new trick devised in this form of athletics in a century.

Marlene Dietrich's limbs made her a million dollars. For a young lady to make a fortune by reason of her legs is natural to understand. But when a man makes a half million dollars with his underpinnings, then there's good reason for climbing to the rooftops and telling the world all about it.

Yet that's exactly what Stecher did. His trick legs, sturdy as the oak, brought fame and fortune to the gladiator from the Middle West. Always athletically inclined, his early craving for athletics was largely due to the trials and tribulations he underwent as a youngster, when the schoolhouse was five miles away, and the only way of getting there was his "dogs."

Like other sons of immigrants, life wasn't all milk and honey for Joseph James Stecher. The young man, of German-Bohemian parentage, first saw the light of day on April 5, 1896, at Dodge, Nebr. On the farm, in his youth, when the youngsters had a few hours away from the studies and the daily chores, Stecher went in for athletics. He loved to play tennis, was crazy about baseball, and was a bug on wrestling.

As he grew older, despite the fact that he continued to travel five miles daily to school, he found that it developed great strength in his legs. His muscular strength came about as a result of pitching hay and doing other manual labor on the farm, with which every offspring of a farmer becomes familiar, even in his early teens.

The man who had the most deadly scissors hold in the combination found the going tough because, when he broke into the racket, stars like Charley Cutler, Earl Caddock, the Zbyszkos, and other terrors were roaming about, mauling each other all around the canvas.

Yet Stecher opines that it was because of the great men he had to compete against that he made the headway he did. Singularly enough, it was brother Tony, who was also a grappler, who was the medium through which Joe broke his way into the sport in which he cut such a figure for twenty years. It was shortly after the "scissors king" had gotten a glimpse of the late Dr. B. F. Roller in action that the urge crept on him, more than ever, to forget all other sports but wrestling, and he trained daily with brother Tony.

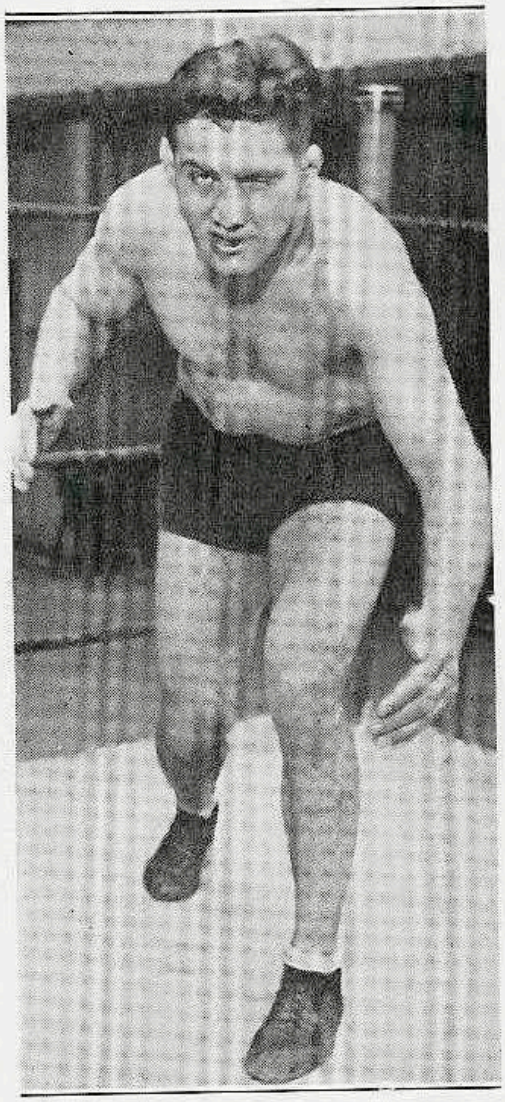
It was in the early part of 1912 that Joe made his professional début, and his brother Tony was responsible for it. Matched with John Pevelky, giant Bohemian, for a bout in Dodge, Tony became ill, and Joe, then eighteen, substituted. He was the most amazed person in the hall when he pinned his opponent down with ease in a

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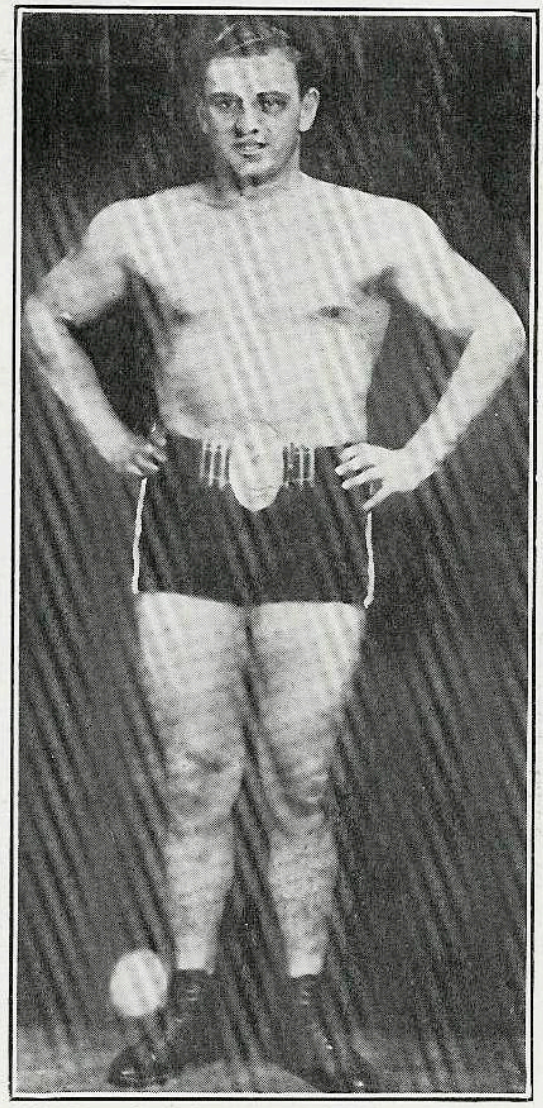
Dick Shikat, from whom Londos won the title. Shikat was a powerful wrestler with a crotch hold as his specialty.


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Jim Browning of Missouri, who defeated "Strangler" Lewis for the title.

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Ed Don George, who was the recognized heavyweight king in Canada and New England.


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Henri De Glane of Canada, who was recognized as the title holder by his country after he had won the decision on a foul from Strangler Lewis.

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ten-minute struggle. The bout took place in the Y.M.C.A. in Fremont, Nebraska. The hold he used had come naturally to him and he decided to develop it. "When I tossed my man," he said, "I never knew the value of my legs, for I used the hold merely as a lever to keep my opponent down. But eventually I learned that I had something others didn't possess, so I perfected it, and the hold gained fame and fortune for me."

Riding the ranges since early boyhood, mostly without saddle, he had unconsciously developed a strength in his thighs which could nearly crack the ribs of a horse. When he applied this grip in a wrestling bout, the eyes of his opponents quickly began to pop and, with Joe's arms free for other work, his victory was speedily accomplished.

It was on July 5, 1915, that Stecher threw Cutler at Omaha, Nebr., in straight falls. (Frank Gotch was the referee.) The astonishing part of his victory was the short time it took him to down the man who was generally regarded as Gotch's successor. The first fall was gained in 17.09 and the second in 10.59.

Speaking of the victory of the "scissors king," for such he was dubbed after his triumph, because both falls were gained with that hold, Jabez Cross, sports authority of Omaha, said:

"An impetus has been given to the mat sport by the victory of Stecher over Cutler. Whereas the sport has been practically dead since Gotch's retirement, the rise of this young Nebraska giant will stimulate matters and bring out the cream of American and foreign talent. It is my prediction that it will take a marvel to beat Joe, and I think that even Gotch at his best would have had no cinch in tackling Stecher."

Before going into the championship match, let us hark back to the early days of the new mat king and see how he gained his fame.

Stecher's first real test came in the tilt with Cutler. It was a match in which his skill and strength were to be tested to the limit, and he fully realized that. He had never met a man of the caliber of Cutler, yet he went into the ring chuck-full of confidence.

The day that he weighed in for that bout, he looked a physical marvel. He was the athlete, every inch of him. He looked like a sculptor's model, so perfect was the contour of his body.

He did not possess the technique of Cutler nor that of Gotch, but he did possess a new hold that he had developed and mastered and he was willing to pit that against the skill of any man in a test of wrestling prowess.

With Cutler, he had all the better of it in point of age and also in condition, and, so far as the natural qualifications for the task before him were concerned, he had the better of that, also. All Cutler had to recommend him when he faced his youthful opponent



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was a good wrestling reputation, long experience, bulk, and a better technical knowledge of the finer points of the game.

That was all, and, as compared to the youthful Nebraska country boy's courage and ambition, it amounted to little. That was conclusively proved in that bout. But that does not mean that Stecher was able to toy with his man, for that is far from the truth. In fact, time and again during that short contest, Cutler raised his young giant and slammed him to the mat with force sufficient to break the back, but when it came to pinning Joe's shoulders to the mat, that was a horse of another color.

Soon after they got started, Stecher was tossed on his stomach and Cutler tried to turn him over with a hammer lock, but the sturdy youth, who was on the bottom, was too strong. Then Cutler raised him over his head and slammed him to the canvas, but before he had an opportunity to get a hold on him, Joe was out of range.

Several times that was repeated, and then Cutler got a half nelson and forced Joe down, but again Stecher was too strong and couldn't be turned on his back. Joe worked a scissors on his opponent but he couldn't hold it, and Cutler broke loose.

Joe then got a half nelson and quickly shifted to a hammer lock as Cutler fell to the canvas. Then ensued a tussle that lasted almost five minutes, first one of them, then the other, getting the upper hand.

Suddenly Joe whirled about, and, before Cutler could evade it, he was caught about the waist and tossed to the ground. With a snappy movement, Joe got on top of his man, and in a jiffy applied the deadly scissors from which, this time, Cutler couldn't break away. Slowly, but surely, Joe was forcing Cutler into submission. A little tug, then added pressure, and Cutler was flat on his back, with the first down for Stecher in 17.09.

The house went wild. Joe was a hot favorite in his home burg, and pandemonium reigned. The crowd to a man, virtually cheered the roof off the house. Stecher seemed fresh as he went to his dressing room for the rest period and, when he came out for the resumption of the match, he bore a determined look that indicated his feelings as far as victory was concerned. Cutler, on the other hand, appeared the worse for wear.

When time was called for the second fall, Stecher got into quick action. He tussled around for a few minutes, then tripped Cutler and fell on top of him. Cutler got out of a body and leg hold and, raising Stecher, slammed him with force.

Joe quickly regained his feet and they maneuvered about the ring until Stecher was able to corner his man. He leaped forward, got a waist hold, quickly applied a leg movement, and down went Cutler.

Joe, like a flash, was on top of him. Cutler struggled to free himself but without avail. Stecher applied the scissors hold with a

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tightening grip and just kept squeezing the breath out of his opponent until Charley was forced to give in. He was gradually turned on his back and the second fall and championship was gained in 10.59 amid wild rejoicing.

When the Stecher-Cutler match was announced, Gotch, who was quite chagrined at the faliure of Westergaard to hold his own against Ordeman and the subsequent defeat of the latter by Cutler, decided to come out of retirement. He seemed irked by the poor caliber of wrestlers who were fighting for his crown and came out with the announcement that he was still the undefeated world champion and would face Ordeman in a titular match a week before Stecher and Cutler were to meet.

Of course that movement hurt the Omaha bout to the extent that many critics remained on the fence and refused to recognize the Nebraska tilt as for the title so long as Gotch was willing to resume his mat activities. But those who had sufficient courage denied Gotch's right to the crown just as had been the case when Jim Jeffries tried to reclaim the heavyweight title when he was matched with Jack Johnson.

Be that as it may, Gotch threw Ordeman with an arm and scissors hold at Humboldt, Iowa, Frank's home burg, before only seven thousand persons, in twenty-one minutes, and then started a campaign to force Stecher into a match on terms proposed by Gotch. In the contest with Ordeman, Frank showed much of his old-time skill, but he was short of wind, and those who had seen him toss his man predicted that it would be best for him to quit, as Stecher's youth would surely offset any other advantages Gotch might have.

Gotch was adamant in Omaha to referee the bout between Stecher and Cutler, and after the match he was offered a bout with the victor. He was eager to wrestle, although the match failed to materialize.

It took about a quarter of a million dollars to get Jeffries back into the ring, but his old side-kick, Gotch, was a little more modest. He told the Omaha promoter that he would be willing to "defend" his crown against Stecher on Labor Day, 1915, for the small sum of thirty-five thousand dollars guarantee, that amount to be turned over to him two weeks before he entered the ring. In addition, he was to be permitted to take fifty per cent of the gate if the receipts would yield more than that amount specified.

Of course, the promoter was unwilling to take that kind of a gamble with a man who had not appeared in the ring for so long a time and whose drawing power, then, was problematical. Thus the match was never consummated, and the wrestling fraternity, satisfied that Stecher was the leading matman of the time, acknowledged him the world champion.

Ed Smith, famous Chicago referee, was among those who thought



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that Stecher would beat Gotch if they had met in 1915. Ed should have known, for he officiated in many wrestling matches, including the second Gotch-Hackenschmidt mill in Chicago. Speaking of Stecher after his Omaha victory, which Smith saw, Ed said:

"The young Nebraskan is a fine specimen. He performs feats that are rare, as far as the average athlete is concerned, and even for wrestlers."

Here is what Smith enumerated in writing the story of Stecher:

"Trains by farm work and not by the ordinary methods of the wrestler or strong man.

"Practises his famous body scissors on the farm horses and perfects it in that way.

"His father, who is just a medium-sized man, is of German descent, and the mother is Bohemian, and young Joe has inherited the strong qualities of both races.

"Joe can hold an ordinary automobile from a standing position with a rope attached to one leg.

"He says he has a pressure of eighteen hundred pounds from knee to knee when he applies the scissors with full force.

"He can split a two-bushel sack of grain with his scissors."

Now for a return to Cutler's career as a champion before taking up Stecher's matches.

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Chapter XVIII

# Cutler's Successes

IT was on February 2, 1911, that Cutler demonstrated in no uncertain terms that he was entitled to the American laurels, by the manner in which he defeated Ordeman in their return bout. They clashed at the Auditorium of Minneapolis, and "The Kid," as Cutler was called, threw his opponent in straight falls. Charley was in splendid condition and gave an excellent exhibition of all-around wrestling.

Ordeman surprised his many followers by being extremely slow and clumsy in his movements. He lacked aggressiveness, snap, and energy. Ordeman insisted that the toe hold be barred and so the match was fought.

Cutler was a master on defense and carried the attack to his opponent most of the time. As Ordeman had made his start in Minneapolis and had defeated some of the best men in the country, although he had lost to Gotch, Hackenschmidt, Mahout, and Cutler, his poor showing in the return engagement with "The Kid," proved a big disappointment.

The first fall came after much pushing and tugging, in thirty-one minutes—the result of a hammer lock—and the second, in eight minutes, on an arm lock and hammer lock.

Following that match, Cutler was challenged by Fred Pilakoff, the Finnish champion, and in a grueling contest that lasted 1.09.39, Referee Barton called a halt after the Finn's shoulder was badly injured. A free-for-all started following the decision, but the official declared he had acted in the interests of humanity as Pilakoff was suffering intense pain.

That bout likewise took place in the Minneapolis Auditorium and drew an immense throng. Cutler proved his caliber by giving by far the greatest exhibition seen in the famous arena, according to all the reports. The endurance of both men was something to wonder at. There was not a moment of loafing and, at the end of the bout, barring the injury, both were still in good enough fettle to continue indefinitely.

Several times Cutler worked his rival into dangerous positions, then, with a convulsive movement of his giant body, a sort of catlike gathering of his mighty sinews, Pilakoff would throw the eager Cutler away. Like a big animal, he would leap at the American only to find the agile champion had stepped aside to avoid the rush.

The end came with unexpected suddenness and it was an exciting climax to a match that abounded in thrills from the call of time.




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Whether Cutler became exasperated at his failure to toss his man of sinew and muscle, or whether it was deliberate, just a few moments before the match came to an end, Cutler swung about, gave a mighty heave, and tossed the Finn out of the ring. Pilakoff struck his ribs on the corner of the platform and slowly climbed through the ropes in intense agony. He was ordered to resume by Referee Barton and, with a leap, Cutler went after his injured prey.

When Cutler was applying every ounce of his strength to pin his man, Referee Barton tapped Cutler, when he had only one shoulder of Pilakoff on the mat, and called a halt. The scribes at the ringside reported that Cutler, in his work, resembled the finished product of a Gotch. With that victory, Cutler secured his hold on the crown.

Cutler and Dr. Roller engaged in three important matches of which Cutler won two. It will be recollected that the first time they met for the crown, the medico triumphed when he put the toe hold on Charley and made him quit. But when they clashed, after Cutler had won the title, Charley knew how to defend himself and prevented Dr. Roller from getting the toe leverage. He did get several near toe holds but none sufficiently strong to do much damage.

In the first part of their match, the men wrestled on even terms for nearly an hour and each had the other in trouble almost every minute. Finally, however, Cutler, after a lively shift of holds, combined a back-hammer and leg lock and bore the doctor down in 52.03.

The men went at it hammer and tongs when they came out for the second fall. After twelve minutes and six seconds of the liveliest kind of wrestling, Roller kept playing for the toe hold, but his opponent evaded it and got the medico with a hammer lock and leg lock. That match took place on March 26, 1911.

Then came another bout, and again Cutler won. He proved himself an excellent toe massage artist at the Majestic Theater in Duluth in a three-falls contest that lasted forty-one minutes and twenty seconds. Straight wrestling marked that match with plenty of rough work. Cutler, angered by Dr. Roller's slapping, retaliated until the bout for a time resembled a fight more than it did a mat affair. They were both out for blood and showed it.

Roller got the first fall with a combination body lock in eighteen minutes. After several minutes of sparring, the pair went to the mat, where Roller whirled out of a scissors and quickly tried the same hold on Cutler's head, but failed. But as Cutler snapped out of it, he fell into a combination body hold that pinned his arms and the rest was easy.

After a short intermission, they returned to the mat, and, after a short sparring tilt, the Penn medico grasped Cutler around the waist and threw him. While working for his famous scissors hold, at which he was a master, Roller grew careless and let his leg fall into

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Cutler's powerful grip. He broke away but was caught a second time and Cutler evened the affair. The fall came in 17.50.

Roller limped from the ring and, when he returned, he seemed to be in agony. The third fall was gained quickly when Cutler got the toe hold again and the medico twisted and squirmed to break away but soon found himself disabled, and was pinned for the final throw in 57.50.

Cutler was ever ready to tackle any one and he didn't hesitate to take on Frank Hockman of Belgium after the last Roller match. It required three bouts to get the victor and each was contested with plenty of energy. The first went sixteen minutes and fifty-five seconds and during the time, both were on the offense and defense often. First one would be on top only to be rolled off and then the other. Dangerous holds were broken by both repeatedly until Cutler got a crotch and a half nelson and downed his rival.

The second tilt was the best of the engagement. It lasted 25.35 with Hockman tossing his opponent with a flying mare. Both roughed it hard and were fatigued when time was called.

The third and last fall was recorded in 11.10 with Cutler in front on a half nelson and bar-arm hold from which Hockman was unable to break.

Before losing the title to Stecher, Cutler tackled two more foreign stars and won over each. He triumphed over Pierre Le Colosse, the French champion, in the International Championships at the Manhattan Opera House of New York in the short time of two minutes and three seconds, with a half nelson, and also disposed of the Bohemian titleholder, Karl Lemle. The last named was a tough one for "The Kid," who, despite victory, knew that he had been through a match.

Then came the mill with Stecher, at Omaha, July 5, 1915, already described, in which Cutler lost the title. That was his first defeat since the Fristensky match.

Following that reversal Cutler went on a tour of North and South America and was hailed wherever he traveled. He visited Cuba, South America, Canada, and all way points and toured for about two years.

Cutler held the distinction of having rolled up a record of having thrown more men in one year than any other man in this country. That was when he went touring with John L. Sullivan and Jake Kilrain. He vanquished 749 opponents on that tour. He later also toured with Jack Johnson and Bob Fitzsimmons. He weighed about 212 stripped.



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Chapter XIX

# Caddock Gains Title

IN our story of the rise of wrestling, we have gone into details describing the various matches of the topnotchers preceding the advent of Frank Gotch as mat king, for the purpose of acquainting our readers with the type of wrestling in vogue in those days. In that way, they could judge for themselves how the sport has changed and how the influx of collegians, with their football tactics, has altered the grappling game to the extent that no longer is it an art or a science, but one in which fisticuffs plays almost as much a part in deciding a winner as does actual wrestling.

In our series, wherever possible, we also have to date given a life story of the champion, after reviewing the match in which he had won the title, hence in this chapter we will give a résumé of the career of Joe Stecher, the Scissors King, and then follow that with one or more articles on his most famous bouts. In our last chapter we gave a detailed account of Joe's bout with Cutler in which he won the crown, and told how Gotch, the referee, became all "het up" and threatened to fight when he saw Joe beat Cutler, with whom Frank had hoped to appear in his "comeback."

Stecher gained the power in his legs by bursting one-hundred-pound sacks of grain by squeezing them. Incidentally, until 1932, when the depression forced him out of retirement, Joe and his brother Anton, his manager and pal, were big grain merchants, but they lost a fortune when the price of grain went down and Joe was squeezed out of the market back into wrestling for a short "comeback."

Stecher was the son of a farmer, Frank Stecher, a Bohemian immigrant, who was the father of three boys and five girls. Like most of the other star wrestlers, he came from a large family, in which more than one member had taken to athletics. In Joe's family, all were athletes.

Brother Anton was Joe's manager and had been almost since Joe started his career. Brother Lewis is a lieutenant-commander in the United States Navy.

Joe was a splendidly built fellow, 6 feet 1½ inches tall and scaling 220 pounds, and when he won the title from Cutler, he was a perfect physical specimen of manhood. With the possible exception of Jim Browning, a later champion, Joe had the most powerful legs of anyone who had been in the mat sport since the days of Bill Muldoon.

Besides wrestling, Joe was an excellent swimmer, a fine golfer and tennis player, and could play baseball with the best of 'em. In fact, when he was a lad he liked baseball so much that he was undecided



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whether to become a professional ball player or a wrestler. He was so expert in the national pastime that, for a week, he played with the Salt Lake team of the Pacific Coast League and, after a scout's report had been sent to the Philadelphia Nationals, a contract was offered Stecher to join the Phillies, but he declined.

Stecher, asked by the author how he had gained the strength that had enabled him to become a great grappler, replied:

"I attribute the unusual strength in my legs to the fact that, when I was a lad, I often walked five miles to school and five back to the farm. The strength in my arms I got from pitching ball. The strength in my shoulder muscles came from pitching hay and wheat, and my powerful hands from guiding plows and milking cows. How's that for a combination?

"When I was seventeen I had an opportunity to see the late Doctor Roller (God bless his soul) wrestle out in Nebraska. I was thrilled by his performance. The fact that he was a famous college athlete added to that thrill, and I made up my mind that, if I had the chance, I'd like to be like him. My ambition was spurred by his performance.

"I told Brother Anton, whom we all called Tony, of my desire. He laughed and asked if one wrestler in the family wasn't enough. You know he was a pretty good wrestler, and, when he went out to get some matches for himself, I induced him, in brotherly spirit, to help me by getting at least one match for me, just for a tryout as I informed him. My coaxing did me a world of good, for Anton acceded to my request and he got me a match in the Y.M.C.A. at Fremont, Nebraska.

"Of course I was only an amateur then, but I proved myself as good as anyone that had ever appeared there. When a team came over from Lincoln to meet us, I surprised all by taking the measure of the instructor of the Lincoln squad. Imagine that!

"When we got home, without Tony knowing it I went to the barn and decided to do a little side practicing with a huge sack of grain as my opponent. I hurled myself at the sack, grabbed it between my legs, and then squeezed it for all it was worth. Much to my amazement I burst the sack, and then came another and another, and before I knew it I had the grain all over the barn.

"Well, that was the start of the use of my scissors hold. Henceforth, whenever I tackled an opponent, that was my favorite hold, and to this day it has been so. I just wrapped my strong legs around the torso of my opponent, and, though at first I used it only to rest while holding my opponent so that he couldn't do any damage to me, later I used it with applied power and pressure to squeeze all the fight out of my opponent and thus to toss him.

"I have often been asked whether that scissors is a dangerous hold.



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My answer is yes, if properly applied. In fact, had I applied it with all the force at my command when I was in my prime, I think I could have squeezed the life out of my man. The stretch of my muscles against the torso of my opponent and the pressure exerted by my legs would eliminate the breath and the circulation and would have caused the heart to cease functioning.

Joe made and lost a fortune in the grain business. In telling of the great men of his period he declared to the author that Jim Londos was the best wrestler he ever met; Strangler Lewis, the toughest, and John Pesek, the craftiest.

"My first professional wrestling bout took place at Dodge, Nebraska, against a fellow named Bill Hokuf," said Joe. "I easily beat him and was awarded $26.00. That was the first money I had ever earned, and my happiness was beyond words. I went out and bought myself a complete new outfit with that money and looked like a dude for the first time in my life. I also bought myself a watch.

"My match with Charley Cutler on July 4, 1915, the bout which Frank Gotch refereed and which cost Cutler's supporters a wad of coin, earned for me the world's title. That contest has been fully described in the last issue and needs no more rehearsing here. Suffice it to say that I was overjoyed by my victory, for it enabled me to reach the goal of my ambition," concluded Joe.

By way of review here, I might just pass over the feats of Stecher after winning the crown, and then in the next chapter I'll go into fuller details. After winning the crown from Cutler by tossing him twice in 27½ minutes, Joe tackled Strangler Lewis at Evansville, Ind., and made him quit in two hours. Then they wrestled again at Omaha on July 5, 1916, and that bout ended in a five-hour draw. More will be said of this match later. It was on April 9, 1917, that Joe lost his title to Earl Caddock.

Stecher was only 21 years old when he won the crown, he being the youngest matman in the history of the sport in this country to attain such honors. Had his brother Lewis cared to take up professional wrestling instead of following the sea, he, too, would have been a world champion or close to it. At Annapolis, he was captain of the wrestling team and went through the years 1913 and 1914 without a defeat. He held the Navy championship for two years. He also was a fine football player and only an injury to his knee forced him to retire.

Everyone in the Stecher family has always been an ardent follower of wrestling. Even father and mother have always been enthusiasts. Joe's five sisters, Mary, Bessie, Blasta, Anna, and Elsie, for a number of years were known as the Stecher girls' basketball team.

Unlike champions in boxing, who usually like to place their title in moth balls for protection, Joe Stecher, soon after winning the

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heavyweight wrestling crown from Charles Cutler, placed it in immediate competition. In less than three months after he had been crowned king of the heavyweights, Joe had taken into camp Bob Managoff, Mort Henderson, Gustenson, Paul Rass, Carl Schultz and Govedorica, and then found a challenger in a young, rising, aggressive, clever Kentuckian who was then forging his way into the front ranks of America's wrestlers. He was Ed Lewis, who later succeeded on several occasions to the title which once rested on the head of Frank Gotch and other celebrities.

It was on October 20, 1915, that he and Stecher clashed at Evanston, Ill., in a thrilling match that lasted fifty-five minutes. Then, with that contest under his belt and his title retained, Stecher went through the field and whipped Pete Koch, Soldah, Lundin, Clements, Bransfield, Martinson, Johnson, Berner, Doctor Roller, Ordeman, Asbell, Americus, Eustace, Jordan, Julius Rief, Leo Pardello, and Youssouf, the Terrible Turk. Quite an impressive string of victories, we must admit.

But that was not all. Considering that in those days the matches were not prearranged as most of them are today, and that a challenger did his utmost to win the title regardless of affiliations, Stecher's record was a most noteworthy one. Continuing his policy of meeting all challengers because he had explicit faith in his ability to whip any man in the world, the Scissors King tackled ten more rivals over a stretch of four months and again emerged the victor in each.

Then came his two toughest battles—a return engagement with Strangler Lewis followed by a bout with John Olin. Wrestling in those days meant wrestling, and not a performance of acrobatics. In 1934, Philadelphia wrestling fans were amazed at viewing a three-hour-and-five-minute match between Jim Londos and Everett Marshall, which ended in a draw. But when Stecher wrestled Lewis for the second time, on July 5, 1916, Omaha fans, where the bout took place, witnessed these two matmen in a five-hour-and-ten-minute titular bout which was called a draw.

The Scissors King insisted that if Lewis had not fought on the defensive throughout, he would have been beaten. In fact, Joe said that he would have ended the match hours before had the Strangler employed different tactics. In the bout with Olin, another draw, Stecher received a huge surprise in the strength of his opponent. Olin gave a wonderful exhibition, both on the attack and defense, and had Stecher at times considerably worried. The bout ended in a draw.

Nine months after the second Lewis match, Stecher clashed with Earl Caddock at Omaha and there lost his crown. The bout took place on April 9, 1917. Up to that affair, Stecher had not lost a single fall since winning the crown from Cutler, but against Caddock he went into the ring a sick man and couldn't cope with his stronger



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adversary. Caddock refused to give the Scissors King a return match, so Stecher, following the footsteps of his Annapolis brother, enlisted in the Navy for service during the war, and when mustered out of service, he started on Caddock's trail and wouldn't let up until he was rewarded with a return engagement. Of that bout we will write more later. It is the mill in which Joe lost the crown that interests us now.

Caddock's victory, while it sufficed to prove his superiority over Stecher, was not convincing because of the unsatisfactory ending of the contest. Joe refused to come out of his dressing room for the third fall. After a lapse of twenty-five minutes, Joe's manager informed the referee that the Scissors King could not resume activities, and the official awarded the third fall and championship to Earl.

Stecher at first offered one excuse to the scribes, namely, that he did not know that the time limit had expired, but later he altered that to explain that he was not physically fit, owing to illness, to continue and was forced to quit. Stecher had won the first fall in thirty minutes and Caddock took the second after an hour and twenty minutes of cruel wrestling. He so exhausted Joe that the champion was ready to cave in. The Scissors King also was badly bruised.

Time and again Caddock tried the ankle hold and the double neck hold on Joe and invariably he succeeded. In the first half-hour, Stecher several times entwined his legs about Earl's body, but Caddock squirmed out of it. Joe was persistent, however, and finally got his man down.

During the hour and twenty minutes of the second part of the match, Caddock was the aggressor most of the time. He got the ankle hold seven times on Joe and at one time had the champion in agony as he threatened to break the bones unless Joe gave in. But Stecher was game to the core and took his medicine.

Stecher's body scissors almost had Caddock after fifty-four minutes of grappling, but Earl broke loose. Both men attacked severely throughout the mill. There was little stalling, each being bent on gaining the victory.

The match was recorded as the greatest in Stecher's career, because of the keenness of the struggle. Joe took his defeat to heart. He liked that title too much to give in so quickly, and set about to regain it. He went after Earl, but without success, and he therefore decided to try out other wrestlers to keep in trim.

He first took on the huge Pole, Wladek Zbyszko, the "Human Box Car" as he was known. The bout, the first of three, took place at Omaha, where Stecher was extremely popular, and ended in a draw. Joe met Wladek twice more, both times in New York, and when their series was over, the score stood one for Joe, and two even.

Of all the men whom Stecher met, none gave him more interesting

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tussles than did Strangler Lewis. On April 18, 1918, they faced each other for the third time, and before a critical gathering in Madison Square Garden, they drew in an hour and thirty minutes. Both were exhausted when time was called.

Then followed the usual score of unimportant victories, many with the usual setups to build a man for a championship, and Stecher, by these bouts, kept his name in the spotlight, his aim being to force Caddock into a return mill.

On March 3, 1918, Lewis and Joe clashed again, this time in Omaha, and Stecher carried off the honors for the fourth time. In November of the same year, they met again in the Garden and in a thrilling duel, Joe again won. Lewis seemed to be jinxed so far as his bouts with Stecher were concerned.

With the war on, Caddock, one of the first to enlist, went overseas where he showed the same mettle as a warrior that he did as an athlete. And when the Army returned, Caddock came back, sound, hale, and hearty. When mustered out of service, he went back to his ranch in Wyoming and from there announced his retirement.

This led to a three-cornered argument between Stecher, Lewis, and Zbyszko for the championship, so early in 1920 Caddock, to end the dispute, came to New York for a match with Stecher.

Stecher won the championship back with a body scissors and arm lock after two hours and five minutes of wrestling in Madison Square Garden.

While Caddock was serving in the Army, Stecher was doing his part in the Navy, and the old rivalry between these branches of the service swiftly showed itself at the Garden. The sailors had bunched themselves in one section of the packed Garden, while the doughboys held forth near by. The mill had hardly started when these groups began hurling derision at each other and the police had all they could do to prevent a clash.

Caddock conceded twenty pounds to the Nebraskan, but he put up a wonderful fight and it was not until within five minutes of the end that his opponent gained a decided advantage.

Just before the end of the second hour, Stecher obtained a body scissors and wrist lock after Caddock had made a supreme but futile effort to put on a half nelson. Caddock brought the spectators to their feet when he broke the double hold, while his shoulders were within an inch of the mat. The effort, however, had nearly exhausted him, and within a few minutes he was again held in a body scissors and this time both shoulders went down.

The struggle had gone about ninety minutes when Stecher, in getting out of a head lock, nearly sprang through the ropes. Dashing back to the fray he obtained a body hold, but this Caddock promptly broke. Caddock showed marvelous defensive ingenuity throughout



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the match and by clever tactics he repeatedly frustrated Stecher's attempts to clamp on his savage scissors.

In a try for a leg hold Stecher clearly showed his superior strength when he lifted Caddock bodily while himself in a kneeling position. The match had gone one hour and forty-five minutes, and a moment later Stecher was brought down, but Caddock could not keep him there. Stecher then got Caddock underneath, but he, likewise, was unable to gain any advantage.

At the end of the first hour both men were on their feet and dripping with perspiration, but neither showed any signs of weakening.

Beginning the second hour, Caddock stooped for an ankle hold and sent Stecher to the mat, but this gained him no material advantage. Then he pulled Stecher down with an ineffective double neck hold. They had been wrestling seventy-five minutes when Caddock electrified the crowd by rolling away from a body scissors and obtaining a double foot hold from behind, a position which gave him an important advantage for the moment. Despite his cleverness, Stecher proved unbeatable. The official time was two hours, five minutes, thirty seconds.




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Chapter XX

# Scissors Joe Again King

ALTHOUGH Caddock's reign as heavyweight champion was short-lived, his fame was widespread, and to this day he is recognized as one of the greatest wrestlers of all time. "The Man of a Thousand Holds" was one of the most colorful of all champions.

Caddock was far superior to the majority of matmen in both technique and intelligence. He was a man who could adapt himself to the conditions as he found them in the ring and that is why his western admirers called him "The Man of a Thousand Holds."

Earl, a native of Iowa, grew up in a small town at Walnut and later moved to Atlantic, Iowa, where for a time it was feared he would not survive because he was so anaemic. In fact, after a consultation with his parents, Caddock's doctor advised that Earl be sent to Colorado to be cured of what the physician called a case of tuberculosis, but Earl's folks were too poor to enable him to take that trip and decided, instead, to send him to the Y. M. C. A. to improve his health.

Under able supervision, Earl became a good swimmer, and after he had mastered that sport, he took up wrestling. Within a year following enrollment, he became physically fit and the ailment which it was feared might send him to an early grave, disappeared. He took plenty of exercise. He liked calisthenic work, and when his body strengthened, he worked with the heavy dumbbells and was, ere long, the best physically developed athlete at the Atlantic Y. M. C. A. Just another proof of what perseverance and will power can do for a person.

The organization to which Earl belonged entered Caddock in an amateur wrestling tournament, and there, for the first time, he displayed a brand of mat work that presaged a bright future. His rise was rapid, and in the ranks of the Simonpures, he soon covered himself with glory. He was then only a middleweight, but so adept was he in the various holds that there wasn't his equal in any part of the country.

After winning the championship of his own club, the famous Chicago Athletic Club, having heard of his prowess, offered him membership in that organization. Earl, eager to get to the front and realizing the great opportunity, quickly accepted. The Chicago Club in 1909, when Earl was only 20 years old, entered him in several Mid-Western amateur tournaments and gave him his chance for




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international fame by enrolling him as an entrant in the San Francisco Panama Exposition Olympiad.

To the surprise of all, Earl added to his fame the middleweight championship in that Exposition, and keyed up to a high pitch by his extraordinary success in every title tournament he had entered, he asked to be given a chance to compete in the Exposition's light-heavyweight and heavyweight ranks and emerged with those crowns also. That clean sweep opened the eyes of professional promoters and managers, and even the great Frank Gotch became so interested in the newcomer that he urged Earl to turn professional.

Realizing his possibilities, Gotch undertook to train Caddock, and under Frank's tutelage, Earl improved rapidly and became a master in the sport. It was after only two weeks' work that Gotch publicly announced that he was confident that Caddock would defeat Stecher and win the heavyweight title the first time they met, and Gotch's prediction came true.

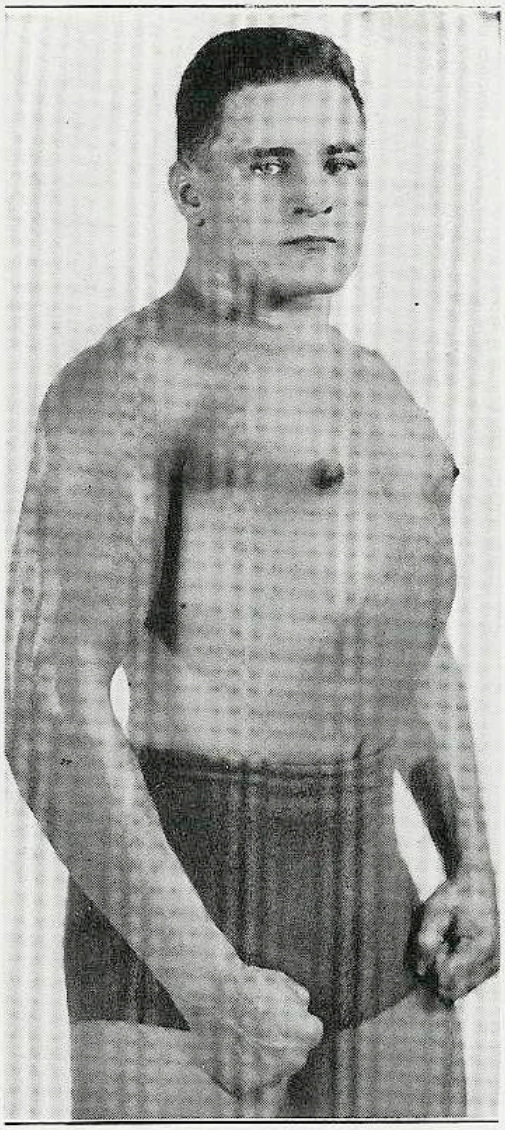
It will be remembered from our story on Joe Stecher, how the Omaha folk were jealous of the attainments of their star wrestler and how they would wager their last dollar on the chances of the Scissors King against the world. Well, the feeling between the Omaha fans and those of Iowa was keen, and when the Iowans realized that in Caddock they had a man who might take the measure of Stecher, their glee was unbounded.

It will be recalled that Stecher beat such stars as Jesse Westergaard, Marin Plestina, Yousof Hussane, Henry Ordeman, John Frieberg, Charley Cutler, and Americus in short time, and Joe's success seemed to rile the Iowans, who since Gotch's retirement were on the lookout for one who could bring back to that state its wrestling prestige. Stecher's success was more than they could stand. The Iowans urged Gotch to come back into active competition, but he realized his days were numbered and he urged that Caddock be the man to bring back the state's laurels.

It was through Gotch's urgings that Gene Melady, the Omaha sportsman who had become manager of Caddock and also his official trainer, was able to land the Stecher match for Earl. Stecher was chock-full of confidence. He didn't think there was a chance for any one to beat him and therein he was sadly mistaken. He had made such a hit that Joe didn't concede Caddock a chance, and instead of taking Earl seriously and being on the spot for at least a week's tuning up, Stecher went out on the Coast for a barnstorming tour. After winding up that tour with a victory over Ad Santell, two falls in fifteen minutes, he visited Butte, Mont., where he defeated Pat Connolly, the Irish lad, before starting for Omaha, the scene of his match with Caddock. That's how much faith Joe had in his ability.

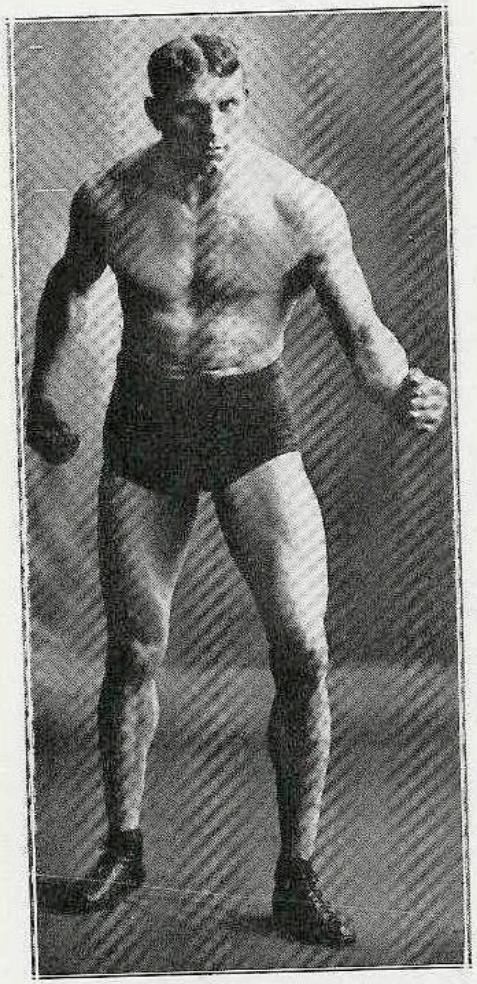
The day before the match, Stecher reached the scene of battle, and,

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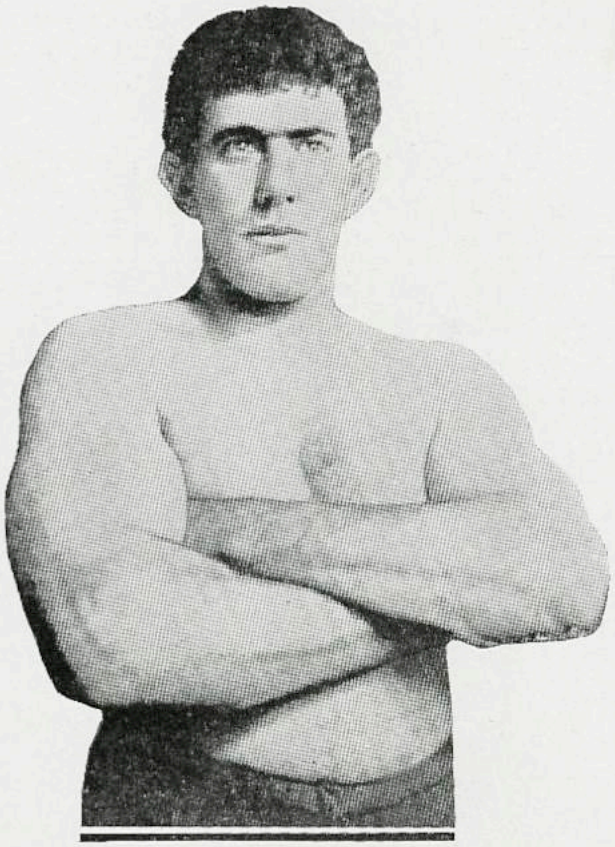
Danno O'Mahony of Ireland, inventor of the "Irish Whip" with which he downed many opponents. Danno was the world champion during most of 1936.


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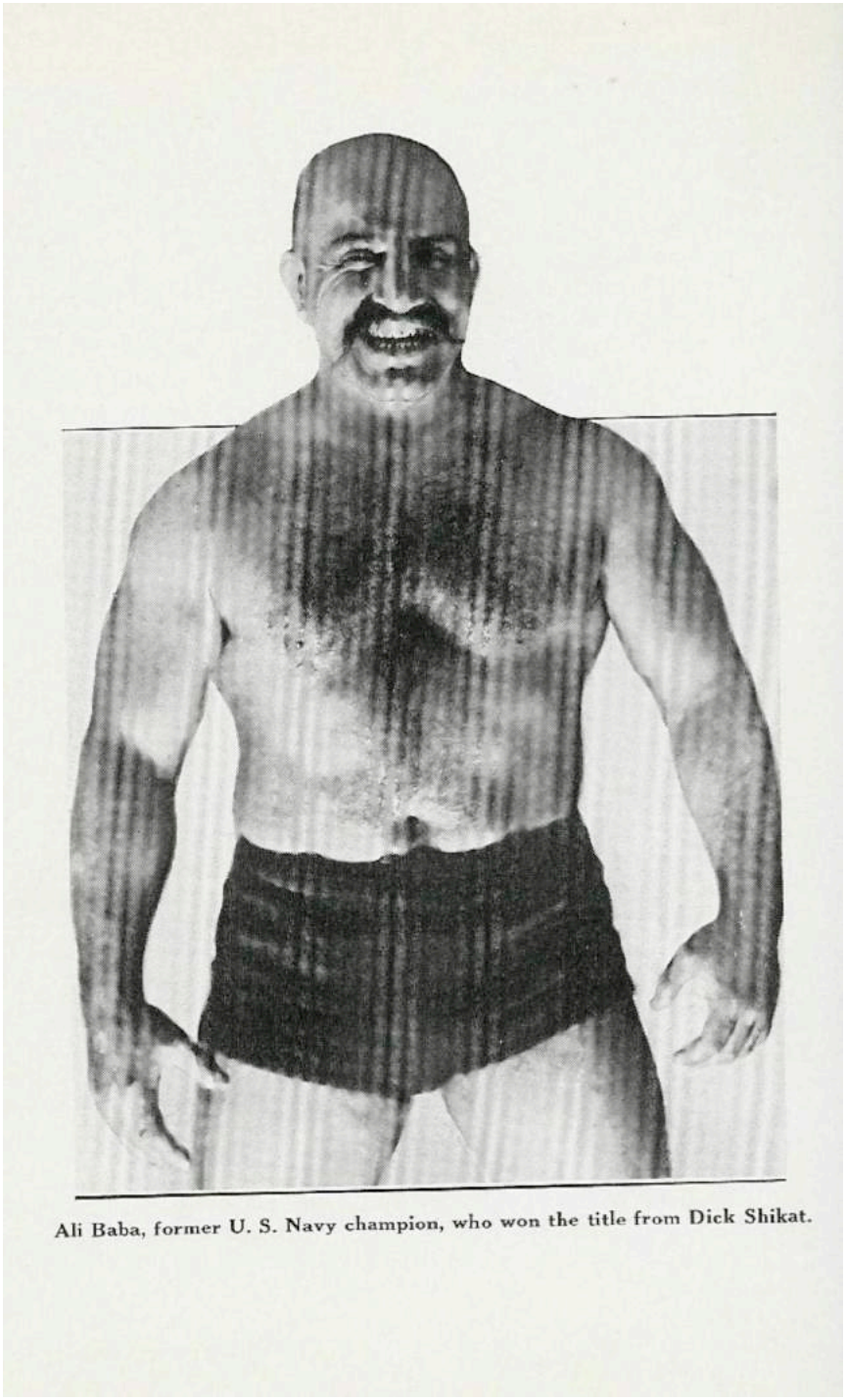
Jesse Westergaard, to whom Gotch passed his crown when he retired.

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Yankee Rogers, the American Apollo who lost to Gotch.


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Ali Baba, former U. S. Navy champion, who won the title from Dick Shikat.

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much to his surprise, he found that Caddock had prepared himself thoroughly for the task ahead of him. Earl was in prime condition while Stecher was tired from his long tour and was far from ready for a proper defense of his title. Caddock was fit as a fiddle. He was trained for a king's ransom. Nothing was left undone to aid in bringing to Iowa the championship.

Melady's handling was that of a master showman and friend. He had enlisted Farmer Burns and even the great Frank Gotch to visit with Earl and give him confidence and tips on how to go after Stecher.

Despite Caddock's wonderful condition, he lost the first fall in a little short of two hours. Stecher was tired when he returned to the mat for the second fall, while Caddock was ready to continue for all night. In a little over an hour, Stecher was beaten, flat on his back. He was all fagged out, so much so in fact that he forfeited the match by refusing to return to the mat for the third fall.

The Dempsey victory over Firpo and the excitement attending the "long count" match between Tunney and Dempsey were as nothing compared to the furor and wild scenes when Caddock was returned victor over Stecher.

The Omaha Ball Park, owned and managed by the veteran Pat O'Rourke, never saw such wild acclaim. The crowd was simply crazed and Caddock, possessing wonderful personality, good looking, clean living, made a great hit and became immensely popular.

Following the match, Caddock and Melady announced themselves as ready and willing to meet any man in the world. Twenty thousand people witnessed his next match at Des Moines, Iowa, when he wrestled Wladek Zbyszko. He also defeated him in a best-two-out-of-three match and a short time later, Caddock, in the same hall, defeated Ed "Strangler" Lewis, the same style, finish match. Caddock became a great card, especially in the Middle West.

The United States entered the war in 1917, and before the draft law was in effect, Caddock, with his title and all, reported at the recruiting office and volunteered his services at the call of his countrymen. He was rejected after careful medical examination because of affected tonsils. This, however, did not deter Caddock for long. He left the same night for Rochester, Minn., called on the famed Mayo Brothers at their sanitarium, and had them perform a tonsil operation, and then returned to Des Moines, Iowa, less than a week later and this time was accepted by the examiners and joined the colors.

A book could be written on the romance following this act. Caddock certainly conducted himself as a great example for the youth of the country and as a model for his profession. He was assigned to headquarters, doing duty for General Johnson's staff in the soldiers' camp near Des Moines.

Influences got to work which caused Caddock to receive offers for



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a commission as first lieutenant and even as captain, but he steadfastly refused, claiming that he was no better than any of the other recruits. He insisted that a private's post was good enough for him and that attitude, combined with the fact that he was the world's heavyweight wrestling king, made him a great favorite with the doughboys. Later he was made a corporal, and still later, he was promoted to a sergeantcy, and he saw service in the thick of the fire.

He was gassed in the Hindenburg Drive, but after being in the hospital for a short time, he again took his position with his company and remained in active service until mustered out on this side. Friends interceded on his behalf and tried to obtain his release soon after the Armistice was signed, but he vetoed such action even thought it meant much money to him, and awaited his proper turn.

When he reached New York, he immediately rushed home to see his folks and then, in need of financial help, he decided to put his title against his old enemy, Joe Stecher. Joe, it will be remembered, was also a service man, he having enlisted in the Navy after he had lost his title to Caddock. Although Joe had been stationed at the Great Lakes and Caddock had been in the thick of the fray overseas, each was looked upon as the representative of his particular branch of the service and on the night of their mill in Madison Square Garden, already described in the last installment, the famous New York arena was jammed.

Caddock trained faithfully for his encounter at Great Neck, Long Island, under the watchful eye of Broadway Charley Rose and Earl's ever loyal friend and advisor, Gene Melady. After a few days, it became quite apparent to Earl's horde of friends that he was no longer the Caddock who only a few months previously had been hailed as one of the greatest of American matmen.

The war had taken his strength from him. The gas had injured his lungs to such extent that when he coughed his saliva was black. But Caddock was no quitter—he had proved that on the field of battle—and he decided to go through with his bout with Stecher because he honestly believed he could again whip him.

When Caddock lost that match and the title, no amount of money could induce him to remain in the game, although he could have reaped a fortune by going on a barnstorming trip. Jack Curley, his cherished friend, urged him to permit a booking around the wrestling circuit, but he turned that down. Then some enterprising men suggested that he accept a proposition from them to go barnstorming and capitalize on his great war record, but he turned against that.

"I'm a wrestler now. I was a soldier, but that's past, and with it, I left all my soldiering behind me," he told the promoters. That's how patriotic Caddock was. No finer example of true Americanism was ever found in the athletic ranks of our boys than in Earl Caddock.

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He was an inspiration to the youth of America. During his entire career, he exemplified the best in American sports traditions, and when the history of wrestling is written, as it will be when this series is over, I shall see that Earl Caddock's name goes up near the top for his wrestling ability, and on top, as the man who has done most for the uplift of wrestling in this country.

I was talking to Jack Curley, America's foremost promoter, just before I wrote this story and, knowing how friendly he was with Caddock, I asked him what he thought about Earl.

"No finer man ever graced a roped square than Earl," he replied. "A true American, a splendid soldier, a great athlete, and a fitting model for our boys to follow."

And then Curley told me a story which is worth repeating here.

On his way East to train for the Stecher match, the promoter of a club in Utica, who had been losing considerable money at wrestling, asked Curley to have Caddock appear for him in one show against Joe Malcewicz. Curley agreed only on condition that the match would be advertised as a handicap contest in which the title would not be at stake and in which Caddock would agree to toss his man within one hour. That was agreed upon, but on the night of the match, Curley learned that things were not quite on the up-and-up and that it was planned to injure the standing of Caddock by having him declared the loser if the bout went the limit. As Earl was not ready for a match, it looked bad for him, yet he consented to help the promoter and take a chance.

It was arranged that if Caddock had failed to gain a fall within the time limit, the bout would be called a draw and, much to the surprise of Earl and Curley, instead of adhering to the terms of the handicap affair, the referee awarded the bout to Malcewicz, thereby technically depriving Caddock of the title and giving it to Malcewicz.

When Curley and Caddock arrived in New York, they had a tough time convincing the press and the New York public that Caddock had been jobbed but they finally did and the proposed match between Caddock and Stecher was staged as per schedule. Thereafter, from time to time, stories appeared, and even to this day they continue to appear, to the effect that Malcewicz had won the title from Caddock, and on several occasions, contrary to the facts, stories have been printed that Malcewicz had tossed Caddock. Those who know their wrestling history, however, and stick to facts, discount those yarns and give to Stecher the honor he deserves—that of regaining the title from Caddock.

The complete record of Earl Caddock, follows:

## CADDOCK'S MEASUREMENTS

His measurements are: Height, 5 ft. 11 in.; weight, 190 lbs.;



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reach, 73½ in.; neck, 18 in.; chest, normal, 39 in.; chest expanded, 43 in.; waist, 34 in.; hips, 38 in.; right forearm, 13 in.; left forearm, 12½ in.; right thigh, 25 in.; left thigh, 25 in.; right calf, 22 in.; left calf, 22 in.; right upper arm, 14 in.; left upper arm, 14 in.; ankles, 10 in.

## CADDOCK'S RECORD

April, 1915—Won—National Amateur Championship. June: Handicap match from Jess Westergaard at Anita, Ia. Westergaard failed to throw him twice in an hour. July: Govadarica, Fontenelle, Ia., 2 falls, time 37 min.; Clarence Ecklund, Harlan, Ia., 2 falls, 37 min.; Charles Chandler, Waterloo, Ia., 2 falls, 26 min. September: Windleroffer, Des Moines, Ia., 2 falls, 21 min; Ernest Kartje, Maquoketa, Ia., 2 falls, 19 min.; Bob Managoff, Anita, Ia., 2 falls, 33 min.; War Eagle, Atlantic, Ia., 2 falls, 13 min. November: Paul Martinson, Atlantic, Ia., 2 falls, 41 min. December: Marin Plestina, Atlantic, Ia., 2 falls, 33 min.

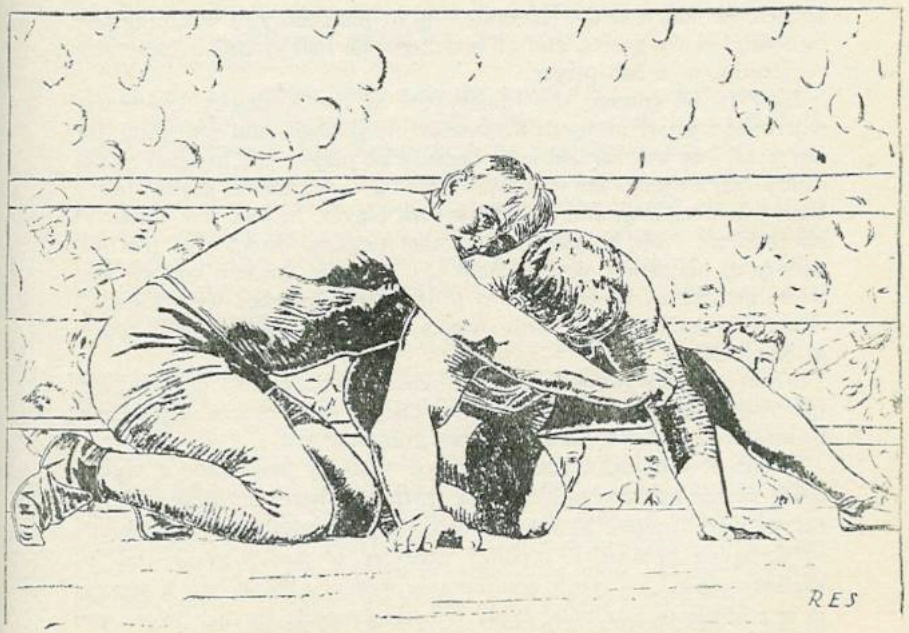
1916—Won—January: Jack Rouser, Laporte City, Ia., 2 falls, Time 21 min. April: Cal Wood, Hooper, Neb., 2 falls, 16 min.; Floyd Domer, Deadwood, S. D., 2 falls 11 min. July: William Demetral, Anita, Ia., 2 falls, 23 min. September: John Frieburg, Audubon, Ia., 2 falls, 28 min.; Jack McMahon, Guthrie Center, Ia., 2 falls, 13 min. October: Harold Christiansen, Lead, S. D., 2 falls, 24 min. November: Jess Westergaard, Lead, S. D., 2 falls, 42 min.; Mort Henderson, Co. Bluffs, Ia., 2 falls, 17 min. December: Jack Furst, Boston, Mass., 2 falls, 11 min.; Paul Domke, Sioux City, Ia., 2 falls, 33 min.

1917—Lost—January: Handicap match to John Pesek at Stanton, Neb., failing to throw him twice in an hour. Won—January: John Frieburg, Sioux City, Ia., 2 falls, time 39 min. February: Paul Martinson, Sioux City, Ia., 2 falls, 42 min. April: Joe Stecher at Omaha and gained title. Lost first fall in 1 hour and 22 min. Won second fall in one hour, 40 min. Stecher refused to come back for third fall and referee awarded decision to Caddock; Ivan Michaloff, Louisville, Ky., 2 falls, 30 min.; Bill Hokuff, Waterloo, Ia., 2 falls, 38 min. May: Allen Eustace, Des Moines, Ia., 2 falls, 36 min.; Tommy Draack, Sioux City, Ia., 2 falls, 25 min.; Rudy Warner, Charles City, Ia., 2 falls, 24 min.; Gus Schoenlein, Kansas City, Mo., 2 falls; Julius Reif, Wichita, Kas., 2 falls; Paul Martinson, Houston, Tex., 2 falls. June: Steve Conley, Lake City, Ia., 2 falls. August: Clarence Ecklund, Des Moines, Ia., 2 falls; Tommy Draack, Harlan, Ia., 2 falls, 25 min. September: John Freberg, Waterloo, Ia., 2 falls. November: Doc Roller, Chicago, Ill., 2 falls. December: Yussif Hussane, Des Moines, Ia., 2 falls, 1 hr. 20 min.; John Fre-

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berg, New York, 2 falls, 57 min.; Dr. Roller, New York, 2 falls, 41 min.

| —1918— | | | Falls | Hrs. | Min. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Feb. 8 | Wladek Zbyszko | W Des Moines | 2 | 2 | 30 |
| April 12 | John Olin | W Des Moines | 2 | 1 | |
| April 18 | Tatalos | W Sioux City | 2 | | 28 |
| April 30 | Helmar Myre | W Mason City | 2 | | 21 |
| May 6 | Yussif Hussane | W Chicago | 2 | | 51 |
| May 8 | Wladek Zbyszko | W Chicago | | 2 | 30 |
| June 11 | John Olin | W Waterloo | 2 | | 40 |
| June 21 | Strangler Lewis | W Des Moines | | 2 | 30 |
| July 4 | Yussif Hussane | W Casper, Wyo. | 2 | 1 | 20 |




**An artist's illustration of Frank Gotch in action.**



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Chapter XXI

# Rise of Strangler Lewis

UNLIKE boxing, and other branches of athletics in which the failure of champions to regain their laurels in comeback attempts is recorded with regularity, such feats in wrestling have been frequent. The cases of Stecher, Lewis, Stanislaus Zbyszko, and Don George are offered as proof that the feat can be accomplished. Lewis has held the world's heavyweight title no less than five times, and if proper recognition is given him for his accomplishment in Jack Curley's Manhattan Opera House tournament of 1914, when he cleared the decks of all opponents in catch-as-catch-can style wrestling, then he should be credited with having held the championship six times.

It is not generally known that Ed Strangler Lewis was an all-around athlete who had won honors in many sports. Lewis, who was christened Robert Frederick, has a most interesting record. He was born on a farm near Nukoosa, Wis., and by the time he had graduated from school, he had become quite famous as an athlete. At the age of sixteen, he had won the championship of his county in wrestling and in several other sports, and at seventeen, he had gained considerable recognition as a ball player.

In 1910 he entered the junior year at the Kentucky University where he starred in football, baseball, basketball, and wrestling for one year, but was banned later because he played pro baseball in the Blue Grass League. He was considered the best amateur in the Middle States in wrestling, and as a basketball player, he had few equals in his territory. He became the assistant physical director of the university in his senior year to help pay his way through college, and while instructor, he engaged in professional matches with some of America's leading talent with success. He was coach of four sports at Kentucky.

From his early youth, he applied himself to the science of wrestling. He made a close study of the sport and through proper application, he mastered all the intricacies of the grappling art.

While at Kentucky, Lewis studied anatomy and made a special study of the nervous system. By learning where the most sensitive nerves were located, he soon gained a big advantage over opponents in wrestling because he applied pressure to such centers and invariably caused his rivals considerable worry. To become a success in any business, one must apply himself properly to such work, and that is exactly what Lewis did. He spent years in perfecting the head



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lock and it was with that hold that he won his titles and almost all his matches.

He showed his ingenuity and tenacity by constructing a wooden dummy of a human head which was split in the middle and was joined by powerful springs when put together. With this dummy, Lewis, daily for years, would snuggle this mock wrestler's head in the crock of his arm and apply pressure for protracted periods. Naturally that kind of practice enabled him to develop the arm muscles and other muscles that were brought into play in the application of the hold, with the result that, in a short time, he was able to get the maximum amount of pressure behind it. At first there was much complaint by rivals that the hold was illegal, but those in control of the sport declared otherwise, and today it is used by every wrestler. Lewis applies the pressure so as to affect not only the brain but the nerve centers.

Lewis' first real effort in pro wrestling was against a strong man at a carnival near the college campus and Lewis almost smothered him in winning. That victory made him a popular hero at the college. It wasn't long thereafter that he abandoned his idea to get a degree. He scaled only 175 pounds when he began his professional career and because of his method of attack, he soon became known as the Strangler. Then some one called him Strangler Lewis, after the original Strangler Lewis, whose first name was Evan, and as Strangler Lewis he has been known since.

The match in which Lewis won the world's heavyweight wrestling title from Stecher was replete with action. The affair, which took place in the Seventy-first Regiment Armory of New York City under the auspices of Jack Curley, was viewed by a packed house. Both Lewis and Stecher were popular, and the fans turned out in large numbers because they realized they would see a titanic struggle between the masters of the sport—one the head lock king; the other, the scissors king. It was on December 13, 1920, that the championship changed hands.

Seldom has a wrestling contest been crowded with so many sensational incidents as the one between these premier catch-as-catch-can experts, and the throng that jammed the armory to its capacity was kept cheering and shouting from start to finish.

Stecher, who was favored to win, had considerably the better of the first hour's work on the mat, the champion being the aggressor and worrying Lewis with painful arm locks and toe holds. At intervals Stecher got his famous body scissors into operation, and while Lewis invariably kicked himself loose after most violent exertion, the hold seemed to reduce the stamina of the stocky Strangler.

In the early period of the contest, Lewis was unable to maintain the clutch for more than half a minute at a time, the Iowan's small



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head slipping out easily. Not until the last seven minutes of the bout did the head lock stick to the cranium of the champion, and it had its immediate effect.

Stecher had managed to get his final body scissors of the night and the situation for Lewis seemed gloomy. He wriggled and squirmed for a time without being able to extricate himself, and then began kicking like a balky horse.

After a strenuous effort, he got out of the lock, and as soon as Stecher, who was weary from his own efforts, reached his feet, Lewis sprang like a panther and circled the champion's head with his left arm. Down went Stecher, and it was nearly a minute before he succeeded in getting his head out of the lock. That was the beginning of the end as the champion was weak when he got on his pins.

Seven times more in quick succession the Strangler put the head lock on his weakened opponent and on the eighth time Stecher was unable to escape and was pinned to the mat.

When Lewis released his victim, Stecher, nearly blind from the severity of the clutch, staggered about the ring and his seconds were compelled to lead him to a chair till he recovered.

Lewis got the head lock on Stecher an even dozen times and Stecher's body scissors was applied six times in all.

Stecher was first to enter the ring, and was followed shortly by Lewis. Stanislaus Zbyszko was introduced and created a sensation by offering to grapple with the champion then and there. This irritated Stecher, who said: "Go away. Don't you see I'm busy here tonight?"

The elder Zbyszko was insistent, and it required the united efforts of Joe Humphries and several camera men to induce "Zib" to leave the ring without a joust with the champion.

The weights of the gladiators were announced as 228 for Lewis and 208 for Stecher.

The main bout was a battle between the head lock of Lewis and the body scissors of Stecher. Stecher had triumphed in a previous contest, but Lewis and his friends felt confident he could reverse the result.

Stecher was first to get a dangerous hold. It was an arm lock and brought the Strangler to his knees. There was a scramble and both reached their feet.

Lewis then got his head lock on the champion, but Stecher extricated his cranium from the clutch, after which there were some acrobatics that brought cheers from the onlookers. Stecher got another clutch on Lewis' arm and brought him to the canvas, but could not keep him there.

The futility of the head lock when applied to the Stecher cranium,

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which is about the size of a cocoanut, was shown when he pulled his head away before the Strangler could tighten his grip.

The champion then took an arm lock, and after downing the Strangler, tried to adjust the body scissors. Lewis wriggled out of the clutch and took a crotch hold, which he shifted to a half nelson.

Stecher kicked himself out of the nelson and at once got an arm lock on Lewis, who had great difficulty in breaking out of a dangerous position.

By this time the skins of the athletes were shiny with perspiration and their hair hung in damp strands.

Each was struggling desperately to get an effective hold, but their strength was so great that each broke out of locks that would have baffled Houdini.

In their titantic struggles, the gladiators tossed each other about like champion acrobats. This fast pace told, and for a few minutes they held each other at arms' length and walked about while mending bellows. Then Stecher took a leg hold and brought Lewis down, but failed to hold him.

After thirty-three minutes, Stecher finally got his dreaded body scissors on Lewis and held it for a minute and a half before the Strangler by a violent effort released himself.

Lewis made a flying leap for a head lock, missed and tumbled to the floor, and Stecher again got his body scissors to work, but it was broken quickly. Again there was an exhibition of acrobatic pyrotechnics, which pleased the spectators.

A few minutes later, Stecher again got his legs about Lewis' waist and held him for two minutes. Lewis had more difficulty this time in kicking out of the clutch.

Stecher shifted to a toe hold and Lewis writhed with pain till he broke it. Lewis got a head lock and for the first time held for a minute. Stecher rubbed his ears when he arose.

Lewis sprang at Stecher and took the head lock twice in quick succession. Stecher broke away and put on the body scissors. It looked like the finish for the Strangler, but he kicked loose and head locked.

Down went Stecher like a bag of oats. After a struggle, the champion got his head out of the clutch, but when he arose, it was seen that he was unsteady on his legs.

Like a panther, Lewis leaped at his man and took a flying head lock. He twisted the now groggy Stecher off his feet and they struck the pad with the thud of a load of bricks.

Three times more the head lock did its deadly work and then Stecher was quiescent. Bothner tapped Lewis on the back and a new champion was crowned.



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Chapter XXII

# Zbyszko Comes to Fore

IN this book on the history of the heavyweight division in wrestling from the time of William Muldoon to the present day, owing to the complications arising because of rival claims and the number of times in which a championship was regained by a title-holder once dethroned, it is rather difficult to give the entire wrestling career of the crown wearers in the period following the acquisition of the title by Stecher, as we had previously done. In order to get proper sequence, it becomes necessary to jump from one wrestler to another as we feel confident our readers will be better posted on the historic contests following such a plan.

Although Strangler Lewis, who held and lost the heavyweight crown a number of times showed his skill in subduing Joe Stecher on December 13, 1920, to win the championship, he in turn, found a master in the elder Zbyszko, Stanislaus, who, like Lewis, held the title more than once. Zbyszko, christened Stanislaus Cyganiewicz, during the heyday of his wrestling career, was known as the "Eighth Wonder" of the athletic world. Long past the age when the average athlete in any other branch of competition would have sought retirement, the massive Pole not only won the world's heavyweight championship, but for years after that, continued to mow down opponent after opponent until, past the half century mark, he decided to retire only recently. When one considers that Stan, as he was called by his intimate friends, often had to compete four or five times a week in various parts of the country, he can better realize the prowess of the subject of this sketch.

Each of the mat stars, as we have already mentioned, had a hobby. Each also had a style of his own and method of his own for training. Gotch, for example, would train on an opponent's toe to perfect the toe hold. Strangler Lewis, would train on a wooden head, to perfect the head-lock. Stanislaus Zbyszko trained on an accordian, practicing grips and holds on this wind instrument to learn how to squeeze the wind out of an opponent. For those who are not aware of it, the elder Zbyszko was one of the most cultured of all matmen, a bookworm and a linguist of rare accomplishment. He is a graduate of the University of Vienna. He was a philosopher, a lawyer, a musician, a poet and a master of eleven languages. Yet, he preferred to make professional wrestling his life work and he succeeded in gaining fame and fortune in his specialty. Prior to the World War, he was a millionaire in his native land, but the war was the cause of



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the loss of most of his fortune and after retiring, he was compelled to come back to wrestling in an attempt to recoup that fortune.

Stanislaus Zbyszko was born in Galicia and was one of five children. His younger brother, Wladek, also a famous wrestler, was almost on a par with Stanislaus in mat prowess. Of him we shall have more to say later. Zbyszko's father was in the Austrian government service and it was his intention to fashion a similar career for Stanislaus.

He sent the boy to a large private school, where the embryo famous wrestler demonstrated he was an apt pupil. He proved particularly proficient in languages and ancient history—and also wrestling, for there was a gymnasium attached to the school. Stanislaus finished his course at the academy when 16 years old.

But the proud boast of his deeds at school was the winning of an amateur wrestling tourney. At that time he weighed just 175, and he was a very powerfully built youngster.

The following year he traveled to Vienna and won a light-heavyweight tourney. Fired with a genuine zeal for the game, Zbyszko turned professional and earned enough money to defray the expense of a course in law at the University of Vienna, where he won his degree.

In the summer time, when the university was closed, Zbyszko turned his attention strictly to wrestling. He encountered the greatest matmen in Europe—Aberg, Lurich, Constant La Marine, Koch and others—and always won. His skill attracted wide attention, and being a man of learning, his society was much sought after, even by the people of distinction.

Kaiser Wilhelm, then king of all Prussia, sent for him, was entertained with exhibitions of mat craft and later employed the Polander as an instructor in wrestling to the crown prince. Similar attentions were conferred upon him by Czar Nicholas when the Romanoff régime ruled the Russians.

Zbyszko, which is just as hard to spell as was the man to throw when in his prime, is an honorary name first bestowed on the grandfather of Stanislaus, also a husky man and a wrestler of note, by the then king of Poland. Translated, the word Zbyszko means might and power, and the Zbyszkos, grandfather, father and sons—all possessed both.

Following the defeat of George Hackenschmidt by Frank Gotch, Zbyszko determined on an American tour with Champion Gotch as his objective. Despite the fact that he had never before competed in a match under catch-as-catch-can rules, Zbyszko, in an effort to prove that he was a mighty worthy opponent for the American champion, went into his campaign with a vim and defeated all of the stars who could be induced to face him. He was especially anxious to meet



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grapplers who had already faced Gotch in the ring, thus learning from them, without them being aware of it, just what it was that made them give Gotch stiff competition yet could not win over the man from Humbolt.

His first major match was with Dr. Roller, formerly of Seattle, on whose shoulders the mantle of Gotch appeared to be due to fall, as it was common knowledge that the champion would retire just as soon as a suitable American champion who could hold the title against all foreign invasion was developed.

With this thought in mind, Roller became associated with Gotch and was his wrestling partner on a transcontinental tour jointly with Jim Jeffries, prior to the latter's match with Jack Johnson and handled by Jack Curley. Roller, a former college athlete, a fine football player, and all-around athlete, appeared to be the ideal man to step into Gotch's shoes.

In the match between Zbyszko and Roller, the Pole won in such decisive manner that there was no doubt of the foreigner's ability, in spite of his crudeness as a catch-as-catch-can performer. In fact, those who watched the contest concluded that Zbyszko, with his perculiarly squat physical make up, his endurance, his speed and his tremendous strength, had little occasion to be versed in the American style of wrestling.

With Roller disposed of, Zbyszko vanquished Tom Jenkins, former champion, and many others, including the great Mahmout, the Bulgarian wonder, another star of the first water and a persistent and determined challenger of Gotch. In the case of Roller, there was pitted against Zbyszko all the fineness of the American style of wrestling, all the valued pointers that Gotch could transmit to his protégé. There was a brain as keen as his own, yet success went to the Pole.

Against Mahmout, the conditions were somewhat different. The Bulgarian was what is called a "natural wrestler." He was not of the educated type, but he had wrestling sense of the highest order, and had a combination of the best points of both Graeco-Roman and of catch-as-catch-can, with an experience against Turkish wrestlers that made him a matman to be really feared, even by the great Gotch himself. Yet Zbyszko, handicapped by lack of knowledge of our style, proved as decisive a winner over Mahmout as he did against Roller.

This made a match with the champion inevitable. Gotch realized, when the articles of agreement were signed, that if he was to be successful, he could not hope to win by strength alone, nor by pure wrestling skill. Zbyszko had proved that science meant nothing to him as a block to success. In fact, the more clever his opponent, the easier he seemed to win.

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Strategy, then, must be Gotch's great card and how well he played it is a matter of history, for when they met on June 1, 1910, at Chicago, Gotch gave the Pole the first decisive defeat he had ever sustained after a winning streak of no less than 945 matches against the pick of the wrestling world. The story of that match has already been told in the story of Gotch's career, but we will here just touch on the high lights by way of a reminder of what happened.

When time was called and the men walked to the center to shake hands, as is the custom but not the rule, Gotch, instead of grasping the extended hand of his opponent, dove, football fashion, at the knees of the Polander. Zbyszko, amazed at the sudden attack, was thrown to the mat and his shoulders pinned to the canvas in the then world's record time of six seconds.

Naturally the fall was protested on the ground that it had been unfairly obtained, but the officials pointed out that, while perhaps it was not the most sportsmanlike thing in the world, there was nothing in the rules to compel Gotch to shake the extended hand and that the fall, according to their interpretation, was a fair one.

Zbyszko was so enraged over the ruling that he wanted to quit the match then and there, but the threatened loss of a forfeit of $5,000 induced him to return for the second and what proved the final fall. As he approached the center to face the smiling Gotch, there was no doubt in the minds of the spectators that the champion had gotten the "goat" of his opponent and that the latter was badly shaken up physically, while his confidence was seriously undermined, with the result that Gotch won after half an hour of wrestling in which the Pole was always on the defensive.

Immediately thereafter, Zbyszko started on a campaign to force Gotch into another meeting. Purses unheard of up to that time were offered, but the champion, then seeking retirement at his farm at Humboldt, Ia., announced that he would never again "wrestle any foreigner whom he had already beaten," a statement aimed primarily at Zbyszko and Mahmout.

That match with Gotch was what really started Zbyszko on his eventful career, for in an effort to prove his superiority to Gotch if given a return chance, Stan made up his mind to tackle each and every wrestler worth while to prove his right to supremacy, and how well he succeeded, is wrestling history. Some critics who have seen most of the stars in the last thirty years, say that Zbyszko was one of the five greatest wrestlers in the world and I am among those. I think Zbyszko ranks next to Gotch and Hackenschmidt as the third outstanding matman of all time.

When Zbyszko first came to this country in 1910 for the purpose of meeting Gotch, he was asked to give an explanation of his marvelous health and ability to wrestle, for he was then well into the



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thirties. His answer, summed up, was "Clean Living." He has never smoked, nor had he ever partaken of alcoholic stimulants, even in countries where wines were the favorite beverages.

He tabooed coffee on the ground that it made one nervous. He kept in constant physical trim by wrestling in competition as often as possible, but when not having a match in sight, he invariably indulged in some strenuous exercise every day. He had his cottage at Old Orchard, Maine, fixed up as a full fledged gymnasium, with a large mat in the cellar and invariably had some of the best wrestlers and athletes in the game as his guests there during the long summer vacations. Jack Dempsey spent much time there while he was in the East and often worked out with the Pole. Other boxers and young heavyweight wrestlers were impressed, while his younger brother, Wladek, was his real training mate. Wladek later added to the family fame by winning the world crown.

In the matter of sleep, Zibby was a puzzle. His work naturally kept him up late at night, and much of his sleeping was secured in Pullman cars while on tour. But at home, he never failed to retire before ten o'clock, to rise before six and to be out on the road for a constitutional while the rest of the household was still lost to the world, devotedly wooing Morpheus.

He was and is a great swimmer. He would spend hours in the bracing waters at the Maine resort and often went far out to sea to seek natatorial exercise. These swimming stunts he invariably followed with a brisk run along the beach, a bout or two with some of his guests, then the long sun bath that tanned his skin to a leathery hue bordering on the Ethiopian, and put him into the best of condition for the strenuous fall and winter campaign which called for such an expenditure of energy and vitality.

It was after the World War that Zbyszko planned the campaign by which he was to begin the greatest fight of his career, to stage a "comeback" in his chosen profession, which, like many other things, had been revolutionized during the war. There had come into the game a group of men bringing with them fresh ideas of specializing in certain holds, men of extreme intelligence, powerful, enthusiastic and young in point of years.

What could he do with them or against them if he returned to America? He appeared to be certain that if once he got started he could at least win a majority of his matches, banking on his great strength and bulk alone, but in this he was mistaken. He authorized his former manager to arrange a tour in which he would meet all comers and try to prove that he was as good as ever, despite the changes in rules, conditions, and the influx of college athletes in the sport, not to mention that he had aged and that he had lived on war rations for upwards of six years. War rations, it should be remem-

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bered do not make the best diet for one who contemplates any indulgence in athletics.

In spite of what appeared to be insurmountable handicaps, Zbyszko never wavered in his faith in himself. He was fat and weighed close to 280 pounds, a weight that would have been of the greatest value under the old Graeco-Roman rules in which he at one time excelled, but was excess freight under the new style in vogue in this country.

The majority of the foreign wrestlers who had been in this country having been called back for military service in the World War, paved the way for the development of a group of young western giants who were to make their marks and three of whom were eventually to wear the toga of Gotch. Among these youngsters were Joe Stecher, of Dodge, Nebraska, known variously as the "Nebraska Plowboy," the "Scissors-hold King," and other titles. There was John Pesek, another Nebraskan, known as the "Tiger Man," Bob Fredericks, formerly of Wisconsin, but now of Kentucky, who was to become later known as "Ed (Strangler) Lewis," of headlock fame, as well as Earl Caddock of Anita, Wis., known as the "Man with a Thousand Holds," because of his wondrous skill.

Charley Cutler, one time sparring partner of John L. Sullivan, who had turned wrestler, claimed the American championship, while Yousouf Hussane, another Bulgarian, who had remained in this country, was considerably in the running. Mort Henderson, later to be known as the "Masked Marvel," was developed in Rochester, N. Y., while Chicago, following the shut down of boxing there, was so thick with wrestlers, that one could hardly pass a crowded street without bumping into one or more of them.

Up in the Northwest, there was another group, mostly light-heavyweights, in which were Adolph Ernst, either a German born or of strong German extraction, as well as John Berg, a Swede, who adopted the name of "Charley Hackenschmidt." In fact, every locality had its "champion of the world."

Gradually, however, the work of Stecher attracted such attention that wrestlers everywhere sought matches with him, only to go down to decisive defeat in record time by the application of the scissors-hold in which he specialized. This was an entwining of the legs around or across the body of his opponents, the locking of his toes and then a pressure on the ribs that has been estimated as equal to 1,800 pounds, a squeezing which none of his opponents could withstand. Of his successes his winning of the crown from Caddock, we already have told our readers. Likewise of his defeat by Lewis.

About this time the elder Zbyszko again returned to the scene. He arrived back in America in anything but the shape of an athlete. His war hardships had told on him. He looked aged in the extreme and was fat and flabby. The wiseacres shook their heads sadly at the



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Pole's announcement that he intended to try to capture the world's title.

His general health was excellent, due to his remarkable method of living a well ordered and temperate life. His organs were functioning perfectly and he felt, although others did not agree with him, that he could undertake a long and rigorous course of training that would fit him for the hard task that was ahead of him. He recalled that when he first came to America in 1910 he then weighed about as much as he did at this particular time, but that he had worked off a great deal of this and that he was all the better performer under American conditions by the elimination of the extra weight. It struck him that he could again do the same thing, although he fully realized that, because of his advancing age, the task would be all the harder. Still he made up his mind to do it, and he did. How he reached the goal he set for himself will be told in a subsequent chapter. His adventures in Russia will be recounted in the next chapter.

Suffice it to say at this time, that seldom in modern times, has an athlete been able to accomplish what the elder Zbyszko had done. At a time when most athletes are listed as retired because of "old age" so far as athletic competition is concerned, Zbyszko proved to the students of physical education that with a sound mind and a sound body, one can continue in active competition without any ill affects until the half century mark is reached.

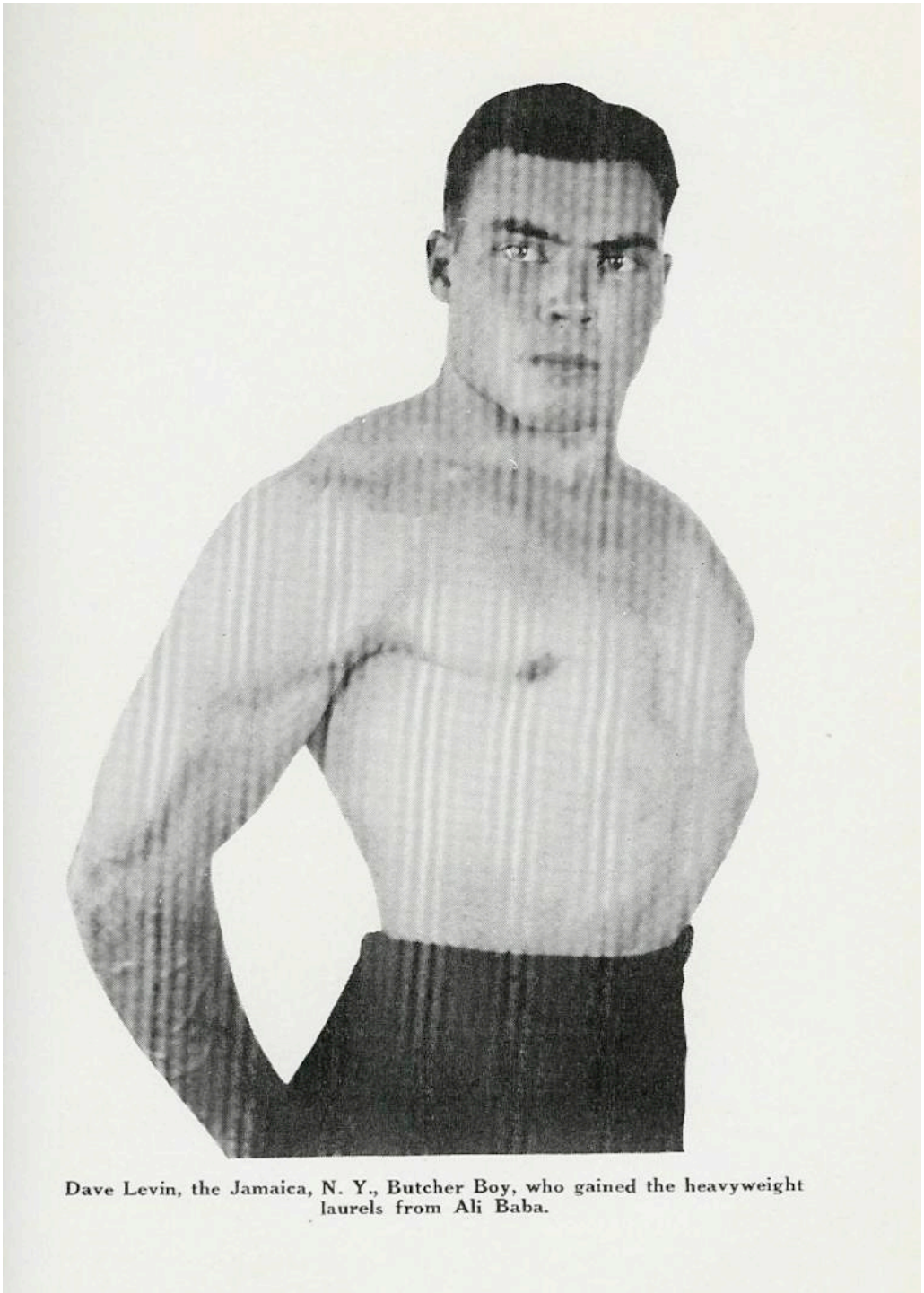
In physique, Zbyszko was a throw-back to the time of the cave man. Standing only five feet 10 inches, he was gigantic in breadth and thickness. In fact, his strength was that of a gorilla. It was superhuman. It was because of that natural strength that he decided to become a wrestler.

His chest, when not expanded, was 49¾ inches and expanded, it measured 53¼. He had a waist of 38, a neck of 19 inches, thigh of 25 inches, calf of 18 inches, wrist 9½ inches, biceps of 18¾ inches and his weight varied between 230 to 250 pounds.

That Zbyszko possessed vitality in almost superhuman degree was indicated by his manner of meeting all comers under all kinds of conditions, but probably the greatest instance of this attribute was shown following his match with Constant LeMarin, the Belgian champion, at Montreal some years ago, a match which George Touhey, of Boston, refereed and which, according to the late Touhey, stood out as the hardest fought mat contest he had ever seen in the history of wrestling on this side of the Atlantic. It was one of the most severe in point of ferocity Touhey had ever seen in his sixty-five years of connection with sports. Nothing that can be recalled ever compared with it, said Touhey.

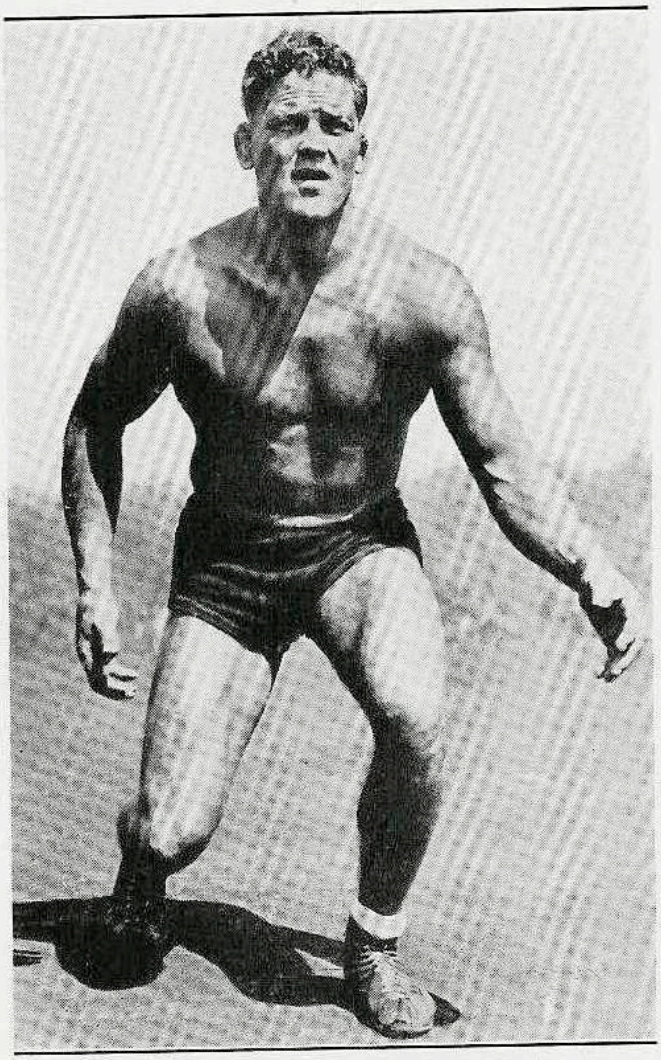
The contest took place in the immense arena at Montreal, on May 24, 1914. The day, known as the "Queen's Birthday," is a holiday in

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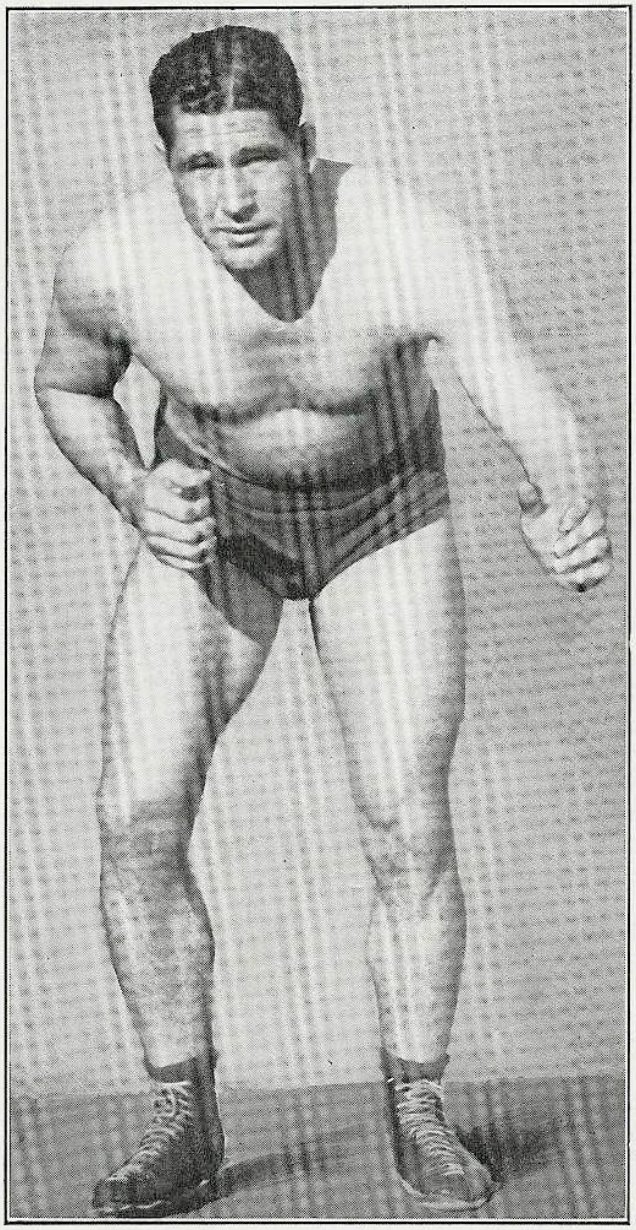
Dave Levin, the Jamaica, N. Y., Butcher Boy, who gained the heavyweight laurels from Ali Baba.


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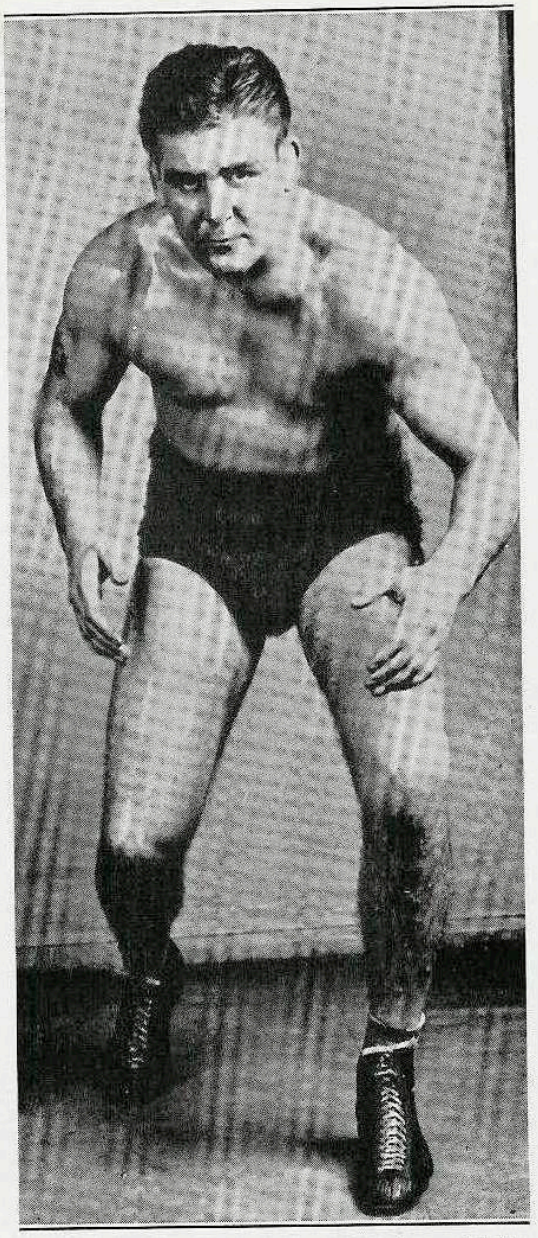
Dean Detton of Utah who forced Dave Levin to give in after two hours of wrestling in Philadelphia, thus winning the world heavyweight championship.

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Vincent Lopez of California, who was recognized as world title holder in that state until his defeat by Dave Levin.


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Yvon Robert of Canada, who was called the world champion in his native country.

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Canada, and because of the popularity of LeMarin, then making his home in that city, as well as the fact that he had previously defeated Zbyszko in a one-fall bout in Chicago, the match attracted worldwide attention. That was the first time any man had ever scored a fall, other than Gotch, on the husky Pole and this rankled in Zbyszko's breast to a degree that worked him into a frenzy.

The great Arena was packed to the rafters and many thousands were turned away for lack of accommodations. As was then customary, the men were called into conference with the referee in the dressing room to interpret the rules and to settle on what should constitute a fall. The match, as originally made, called for "mixed styles," that is one fall to be at Graeco-Roman, the other at catch-as-catch-can and the style of a third, if necessary, was to be decided, if they wished it, either by the toss of a coin or by whichever one should win his fall in the shortest space of time.

But there was an eleventh hour hitch. Just what this was could not be determined, as the conversation was carried on in French. Suddenly, however, Zbyszko leaped to his feet, and shouted in English: "He has assailed my personal courage and this will be a battle to the death."

Zbyszko strode from the room and went direct to the ring, where he took his corner and sullenly refused to listen to any further requests for information as to style or the conditions under which the contest was to be decided.

It was finally agreed between the managers of the men that the first fall should be at catch-as-catch-can, and with this understanding the principals were sent into action. From the first instant it was realized that both wrestlers were in such a mental state that they would resort to anything, fair or foul, and that the mere winning of that contest, was secondary to the desire to punish. This was all the more strange because, up to this time, both had enjoyed world-wide credit as being clean in their work on the mat as well as cultured gentlemen, for both were university graduates and noted for their extreme intelligence and manliness in combat. But whatever it was that happened in the dressing room, the fact remains that for the time being both Zbyszko and LeMarin were turned into frenzied human beings bordering on the brute.

After they had been wrestling less than fifteen minutes they fell, locked together, through the ropes onto the concrete floor. On the way out, Zbyszko's head came into contact with the corner of the press table, inflicting a deep gash from which the blood poured. They continued to struggle on the floor, and were only separated by the combined efforts of the referee, many of the spectators, and some police officers.

The referee sent them to the dressing rooms, figuring that, if they



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could be quieted, the contest would go on and the better man, in a wrestling sense, would win. This, however, was not to be the case. Zbyszko's injured forehead was patched up and, against the advice of the attending surgeon, he insisted on returning to the mat and continuing the battle.

LeMarin was finally adjudged a loser on a foul, when the Pole was so badly injured that he had to be carried from the ring and transferred to the hospital, where he was found to be suffering from a fracture of the skull and brain concussion.

Although badly injured, Zbyszko escaped from the hospital, and despite his condition, traveled to New York to enter the ring in Madison Square Garden against George Lurich, the trickiest of all the Russian wrestlers, and one of the world's strongest men, as well. Even in his deplorable shape, weakened by loss of blood, Zbyszko gave Lurich a terrific fight before collapsing.

Yet only one month later, we find our hero in St. Petersburg, now Petrograd, capitol of Russia, where he had gone to compete in an international tournament in which both Aberg and George Lurich were entered. Prior to the World War days, Russia was one of the most prolific spots on earth for good wrestlers and Zbyszko was one of the favorites in the land of the Czar. He had already defeated Lurich and was clamoring for a chance to get even with Aberg. That was to come sooner than Zbyszko had expected.

Here is the story which I received from Zbyszko upon his return to America. It was soon after he had whipped Strangler Lewis and won the world crown, that he was asked to give an account of his thrilling adventure in Russia and his story, here repeated, makes most interesting reading:

Zbyszko, being an Austrian subject, was interned, but as he was an athletic idol among the Russians, he was given the greatest possible leeway and permitted to compete with the same freedom as subjects of the Czar. This situation continued until the Revolution, when a sudden change came over the authorities, with Kerensky at the helm. Many of his privileges were cut off and there was an undercurrent which he could not understand at first, but which became plain at a later date.

Lurich, as previously mentioned, had been in America at the outbreak of the war, as was Alexander Aberg, the Esthonian, also a Russian subject, who had held the world's Graeco-Roman championship up to the time of his defeat by Zbyszko at Boston in February, 1914.

Aberg, smarting over the defeat, and back in Russia after the decree of amnesty by the Kerensky government, goaded by professional jealousy and the fact that he was being pressed by Zbyszko for payment of a debt of 6,000 rubles which Aberg refused to pay,

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circulated the story that Zbyszko was in reality an Austrian spy and set about luring him to Moscow on the pretext of making a match with Aberg for the Graeco-Roman championship. Zbyszko, not suspecting the ruse, fell into the trap set to capture him for the Bolsheviki, which was in control in that district then.

The wrestling situation at the time was dominated in war-torn Russia by Aberg and George Lurich and Aberg had no difficulty in convincing the Kerensky soldiers of the truth of his statement in regards to the status of Zbyszko, Stanislaus protested and informed the authorities that jealousy and the indebtedness of Aberg to him were responsible for Aberg's charges, but without avail. The country was in a tumult at the time and people were being arrested upon the least suspicion and without the formality of a trial were executed forthwith. Secret executions without trial were the rule of the day and that's what Zbyszko felt would happen to him.

The authorities, moved by the wisdom of Solomon or an odd sense of humor, ordered that Zbyszko must prove his quality by wrestling Aberg.

The match was made, the winner to receive the purse of gold in the center of the ring as was the custom in Europe. How this turn of affairs suited Aberg, Zbyszko doesn't know. Aberg had no choice in the matter, but he was in a far more fortunate position than Zbyszko. The order provided that if Zbyszko lost the match, he should be executed immediately.

The bout was held in a big hall in Petrograd, packed with soldiers friendly to Aberg, the Russian, and anxious to see Zbyszko lose the match and his life. Aberg, so Zbyszko says, hired several hundred soldiers to root for him in the American style.

The contest lasted two hours and forty-three minutes, for Aberg was a first-class wrestler, strong and tricky, and Zbyszko dared not take chances. Finally he wore Aberg down and pinned his shoulders to the mat.

With several thousand soldiers ready to do him harm, Zbyszko, calm and collected, waited until the purse was given him, then tearing open the bag containing a thousand rubles, he threw the money into the crowd. While the soldiers scrambled for it, Zbyszko made his escape by automobile. He was pursued but got to Odessa where friends hid him. In the early days of Bolsheviki rule, he could not leave Russia, but wandered around the country, with little money and less to eat. The armistice signed, he crossed the border to his home in Poland, half-starved and amazingly thin for such an elephant of a man. Food was plentiful here, and Zbyszko jumped from 200 to 275 pounds.

In Poland, he became the trusted lieutenant of Ignace Paderewski



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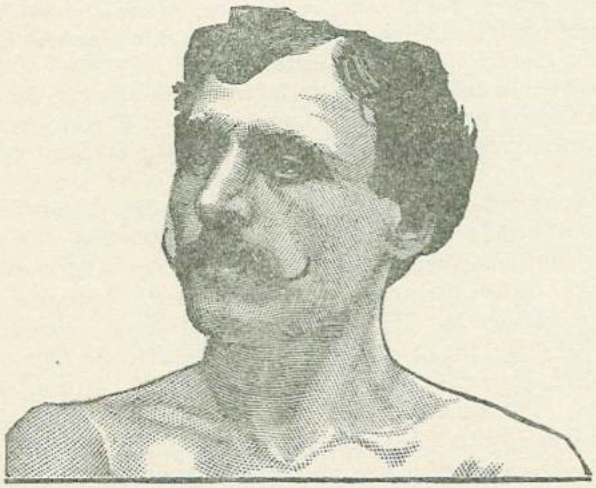
in the reconstruction of his native land, a position he held throughout the regime of the famous pianist.

The fortune Zbyszko had before the war was gone. He had to begin all over again as a wrestler, and as soon as he could, came to America.

First being a stout man, and a veteran, Stanislaus Zbyszko had to go through a long siege of training. He took off forty pounds, and his skin, recently stretched by layers of fat, hung on him in folds. But his muscles were powerful as ever and his endurance had come back.

First he beat Soldier Leavitt, a 246-pound wrestler, then threw Padoubny, the Russian Giant, six feet six and 255 pounds in weight. The Soldier Leavitt whom he beat, is now the 302-pound "Man Mountain Dean."

Recovering top form, Zbyszko worked his way up and won from Stecher. Then he challenged Strangler Lewis, the acknowledged champion. They met in the 22d Regiment Armory, New York, and Zbyszko startled the wrestling world—and Lewis—by throwing the Strangler in 23 minutes and 17 seconds.



**Lucien Marc Christol, wrestler and strong man, who was first to perform feat of heaving a cannon ball shot from his shoulder.**

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Chapter XXIII

# Zbyszko Wins and Loses Title

WHEN Zbyszko arrived in this country after the World War, he looked anything but the great athlete the American public had come to know when he first reached the Land of the Free back in 1909. Then he was a physical marvel, but upon his return from a compulsory sojourn in Russia and a more profitable stay in his native Poland where he helped the great Paderewski feed the poverty-stricken children, he carried a huge paunch, was flabby and scaled 276 pounds as against his normal weight of 240. In fact, a witty Bostonian, writing about Stanley, said, "He is the greatest all-round wrestler that Poland has ever sent to this country."

But that kind of criticism didn't bother Zbyszko. He had made up his mind that he would replenish his lost fortune and he set about his task with determination. He sought matches and was willing to wrestle all comers. He traveled up and down the country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes. Then he crisscrossed, playing the "sticks."

He popped up in all kinds of places, but always with a victory to his credit. The opponents became tougher and tougher, the going a bit harder with the progressing weeks, yet he always triumphed. From 276 pounds he had worked down to 260, then 255, when he declared that the best in the world was none too good for him and the harder they came, the better he would like it. Still, the public, remembering his previous condition and his great age, refused to accept him seriously, but promoters continued to book him, sure that he still retained his great box office drawing powers.

Lewis, in the meantime, had beaten Stecher at the 71st Regiment Armory in New York, with a series of head locks, applied so hard that, added to Joe's previous injury, the Nebraskan was practically put out of the running for some time. This was the Pole's great opportunity and he was not slow to take advantage of it.

After Zbyszko had repeatedly challenged for a titular match and this had been refused him, the astute Jack Curley, world's most famous wrestling promoter and maker of champions, conceived the idea of getting Lewis and Zbyszko together through outside channels. At the time, the Americans of Irish descent were engaged in collecting an Irish Relief Fund, and in this country U. S. Marshal Tom McCarthy was chairman. The marshal being a close friend of Curley, Jack urged him to offer the support of his colleagues for a benefit show and Lewis consented to wrestle Zbyszko for the fund. As a result, the Irish Relief Fund staged the affair, with Curley at the




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helm, and the Fund collected a little more than fifty thousand dollars as its share of the receipts.

The contest, in which the championship changed hands, was a bewildering affair because of the sudden ending caused by an accident to Lewis. The affair was a one-fall bout and Lewis was downed in 23 minutes and 17 seconds.

The gladiators appeared in the ring fit for battle and ready to fight for each point. Lewis protested the appearance of Zbyszko without shoes and for many minutes they wrangled but Stanislaus refused to yield and the bout was started with him wrestling in his bare feet.

Lewis scaled 235 pounds, to 255 for his opponent. It was a battle of giants in more than one way, for both not only were big, husky grapplers, but conceded to be the best in the field at the time.

When Referee Bothner got the men under way, there wasn't a person in the vast assemblage who thought for a moment that the match would not last at least an hour. With the clang of the gong, the men came to the center and immediately began to rough matters, to the delight of the spectators. In the first four minutes, Lewis had a decided advantage.

On one occasion during that period, he picked Zbyszko up bodily and hurled him to the mat with a crash. Zbyszko's head struck the floor and it was astounding to see him leap up in a few seconds and take the offensive. Lewis, seeing that the Pole was a bit stunned, tried for the head lock, but couldn't get a firm grip. Zbyszko then tried for a crotch hold, but Lewis got out of range.

For fourteen minutes it was a nip-and-tuck affair with lightning-like rushes, attempts at all kinds of holds, but few successes. Whatever damage was done was accomplished by Lewis, who had the upper hand with three head locks to his credit.

Then Zbyszko started his work. He forced Lewis to a corner and, grabbing him about the body, tried to slam him down but didn't get far. He then forced Lewis to the mat with a body hold and followed with a toe hold. Lewis broke away after a minute of squirming while the crowd, mostly Lewis rooters, cheered.

The first really dangerous hold secured by either was a head scissors and arm lock applied by Lewis when they had been at it for slightly more than 19 minutes. The champion almost had the Pole's shoulders down when Zbyszko, by a powerful jerk, freed himself.

Once again Lewis applied the hold and again Stanislaus wriggled out of it, this time by jerking himself under the ropes.

When they got to the center again, Lewis leaped down and, obtaining a toe hold, punished Zbyszko severely before the Pole got free. The crowd was with Lewis and hooted the veteran.

It was shortly after that Zbyszko made his bid for victory and

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succeeded. He secured a torturous toe hold, his favorite, and held it for one minute and forty seconds. It appeared several times that Lewis would be forced to give in but, after several attempts, he finally freed himself and limped across the ring.

Lewis was wild with rage when Zbyszko made another attempt to get at the toes and a rough session followed. Lewis had been the aggressor and the crowd was with him. He had the better of the going up to this point and whatever thrills had been furnished were mostly because of his aggressive tactics.

During the rough tussle, Lewis tried several times to get an opening and finally he spied it and made a leap forward to get the head lock on his rival. His left arm was poised, and Zbyszko, seeing him coming, bent his back hunchback style, and Lewis, in leaping, missed and fell flat on his back. Quick as a flash, Zbyszko, in a lightning move, tossed himself on top of the champion, and a new titleholder was crowned.

Lewis claimed after the mill that he had injured his back and therefore couldn't get out of range of his opponent, but George Bothner could do nothing other than to award the fall to the Pole, according to the rules. Thus a new champion came into the wrestling field.

On the night of February 6, 1922, Zbyszko successfully defended his title against Earl Caddock in Madison Square Garden by scoring two out of three falls. Caddock made an excellent showing against the ponderous Pole, but lacked the strength to toss his man more than once. Referee Johnny Fleeson was roundly scored by the crowd because of his poor work as third man in the ring.

The contest was not a spectacular one. Caddock got his fall by dropping the Pole and falling on top of him in executing a chancery and arm lock. As for the two falls given to Zbyszko, they failed to meet with the approval of the spectators, who decided that both were gifts.

Listed under the new rules which were adopted that year by the New York State Athletic Commission as the "rolling falls," they were called against the challenger as he spun out of powerful half and full nelsons. Partly bridging with his neck, he kept his shoulder blades free from the canvas on both occasions and Referee Fleeson, according to the experts, should not have acted so hastily in awarding a fall on either occasion. So far as observers at the ringside could see, and the author was among them, Caddock was not pinned "according to Hoyle."

Zbyszko weighed in at 243 pounds, as against 190 for his challenger. Notwithstanding Caddock's reputation for speed, the burly Pole seemed well able to fool with him. They roughed each other about the ring with little damage to either, until Caddock, after



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breaking from a body hold, bounced off the ropes and, with a flying tackle, sent the champion sprawling. The attack nearly won a fall for the former soldier, but the veteran champion squirmed loose and, a moment later, had Earl lashed with a leg and arm lock which, for a moment, seemed fatal.

Incidentally, for those who claim that the flying tackle in wrestling was first introduced by Gus Sonnenberg, let us go on record that that form of wrestling was first introduced by Earl Caddock.

He said that he first learned its use abroad in the army during bayonet drill when, after a fling with the long blade at a dummy target, he practiced leaping at the target to bring him down in hand-to-hand combat and, when he clashed with Zbyszko, he attempted it for the first time in a mat bout.

It was after Earl had been caught by Zbyszko with the leg and arm lock that Caddock fought desperately to release himself and did so, only to get caught a few seconds later in a mean half nelson. He was in a bad way, but broke loose and, for a third time, fell into a mean hold when Stanislaus jumped on top of him. Caddock's shoulders were not on the mat, yet Referee Fleeson leaped to one side and tapped Zbyszko on the back, indicating that he had won the first fall. Fleeson, through Joe Humphreys, announced that he had awarded the fall as a rolling fall, which was permissible under the new rules. The time of the fall was twenty-five minutes.

The crowd roared its disapproval. Pandemonium reigned. Hisses, catcalls and streams of paper flooded the arena. The decision left Zbyszko amazed, as he was a short time later when, in a lively mix-up in one of the corners, Fleeson put a sudden end to hostilities by giving the fall to Caddock. The time of that fall was ten minutes and twenty seconds. Fleeson declared that Zbyszko had been thrown by a chancery and arm lock, but the crowd was amused by his second verdict.

Then came another strange decision which enabled Zbyszko to retain the title. When they came together for the final fall, they worked about until Zbyszko had Caddock in a deadly arm lock and body hold, and just when it appeared that Caddock was through, he broke out of the hold. Then, in a mix-up, in which Caddock was underneath, yet not quite down, Fleeson tapped Zbyszko on the back and awarded him the deciding fall. Thus, on a fluke, the title bout ended with the champion retaining the crown.

Notwithstanding the unsatisfactory issue, the match was highly entertaining. Although outweighed, 223 pounds to 190 pounds, Caddock performed in something resembling his pre-war form when he was without a peer. He more than held his own. He not only scored the only real fall of the match, but if a decision on points had been given, Caddock would have earned it.

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One week following the victory over Caddock, "Zibby" undertook to toss two challengers in one night: Francois Le Marture, heralded as the French Champion, and Jim Londos, the Greek Champion. The affair was arranged for St. Louis, the home of Londos who then, as today, is the popular idol of the home folks, and it was agreed by Zbyszko, the champion, to toss each of his opponents once within seventy-five minutes. By remaining an hour against the powerful Pole, Londos gained national attention, and with that match, he started the upward climb that eventually landed him the world honors.

Zbyszko downed the Frenchman in 14 minutes and 52 seconds, the foreign star succumbing to a toe hold and head scissors. Thus Zbyszko had an hour and 8 seconds to toss Londos to win the handicap match and although the Pole gave Londos a terrific shellacking, as wrestling goes, he was unable to pin Jim's shoulders.

Le Marture substituted for Joe Geshtowt, the Bulgarian from Boston, who sent a telegram stating that owing to an attack of influenza he was unable to make the trip. The Frenchman proved himself to be a classy wrestler, but entirely too small for such a powerful man as his opponent. The wonder is how he managed to go nearly fifteen minutes, as it appeared Zbyszko could crumple him at any moment.

Eel-like ability to squirm his body and slip out of holds marveled the packed house of spectators, who, of course, pulled hard for the smaller man. The Frenchman also showed some strong bridge work, on one occasion, saving himself by bridging with Zbyszko having his entire weight upon the little fellow.

Of course it was the grappling of Londos that carried the spectators into unbounded enthusiasm time after time. His exhibition of speed, cleverness, strength and "gameness" held the fans spell-bound. On several occasions it seemed that he would not last another minute, yet he continued. Through grand reserve power and unlimited nerve, he pulled himself through each time. On two headlocks and a toe hold, especially, did the Greek man bring forth wild cheers from his many admirers.

Zbyszko got a toe hold toward the end of the match, fifteen minutes time remaining, and held it for nearly two minutes, applying enough force to break an ankle on the ordinary man. It seemed certain that Londos would be unable to withstand the pain and he was asked several times by Referee George Baptiste if he wished to give up.

He refused to quit and finally succeeded in pulling his body far enough away from the powerful champion to break the hold. The first severe headlock the champion had on Londos was clamped on at the 35-minute mark and the Greek boy did not get away until two minutes afterward. He finally broke loose by continually bouncing his body on the mat, his shoulders sometimes hitting the mat, but



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never staying there long enough to be caught by the referee as a pin fall.

Zbyszko gained the two punishing headlocks from a standing position and in front, having clamped his arms around Londos' head, forced the Greek boy backwards to the mat. The champion had other headlocks during the hour and eight seconds, but it was the two gained from a standing position that resulted in severe punishment and close calls for London. The champion is a powerful man, whose weight advantage of about 35 pounds made life somewhat miserable for the smaller grappler on these occasions.

Headlocks and toe holds were not the only punishing holds Londos had to combat with great science and strength as he got out of a couple of double wristlocks, one in particular toward the end of the match, when Zbyszko had a double wristlock with Londos' arms about him with Jim on the floor. The champion was lying on top with his face upward and it was up to Londos to bridge to save himself.

When Londos finally got out of this dangerous position there were only ten minutes left and the Greek boy put up fine defensive work in his effort to keep on his feet for the balance of the time. He went to the mat on several occasions, but the champion was not successful in getting a real hold on his youthful opponent. Londos also killed time by getting headlocks and holding on as long as possible. A couple of times Jim threw the champion over his shoulder with headlocks.

Although Londos had several holds and made matters interesting for the champion on a number of occasions, he never had the old boy in real danger of a fall. A toe hold toward the finish, in fact within a couple of minutes after Londos had broken the severe one with which Zbyszko had punished the Greek Adonis, was the only time that the big Pole was in any real agony and then only for a few seconds, as his great knowledge of the sport enabled him to get away before being severely damaged.

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Chapter XXIV

# Lewis Again Champion

IT was at the Wichita Municipal Forum of Wichita, Kansas, that the match between Lewis and Zbyszko was staged that enabled the Strangler to regain his world title. The bout took place on March 22, 1922, and was one of the fastest, cleanest wrestling tilts ever staged in this country in which a title was at stake.

Lewis was not satisfied that the Pole was his master after Zbyszko had won the crown from him, and trailed Stanislaus until he obtained the return bout. The men agreed to a three-fall affair, two out of three falls to count, and, despite an attendance of only 5,211 paid admissions, the bout drew a gate of $17,000. When the contest was first proposed, it was thought that close to $30,000 would be realized, but the interest was not as keen as was expected. Tom Law promoted the affair and Paul Sickner refereed.

From the start, Lewis was the favorite. The western fans, who knew Lewis' ability, were keenly for him. The betting was high and Lewis entered the ring a 6 to 5 favorite, with plenty of money being wagered on both sides. There were times during the match when the spectators hooted Lewis for what they termed unfair tactics, but the same methods, used today, would have brought applause instead. The Strangler, early in the bout, employed pushing methods and even used the palm of his hands to slap his opponent until he was warned by the referee to stop that method of attack.

The first fall was gained by Zbyszko in 41.32 with a body scissors, but before he scored it the Big Pole knew that he was in a gruelling match. Lewis' head lock was used with telling effect, and twice he got a painful toe hold that made Stanislaus squirm.

They started off at a snail's pace, but it didn't take long for the pair to get warmed up, and from that point to the finish there was action aplenty. Zbyszko's body scissors almost pinned Lewis twice before the first fall, but on each occasion the Strangler released himself after considerable effort.

After an intermission, the men came out for the second fall, and Lewis was the aggressor from the start. He was out to regain the title and he fully realized that he couldn't afford to waste any time with his powerful opponent keyed to high pitch. Lewis got Zbyszko to the mat after four minutes of maneuvering, and then slapped a head lock on him. He held it for almost two minutes, and soon after Zbyszko pulled out of it, he was caught in a toe hold and later, in another head lock.

In fact, Zbyszko seemed to have lost much of his cunning after




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the first fall and it was an easy matter for his rival to gain the second fall with pushing tactics in 18.13. Lewis used the palm of his hands against Zbyszko's face and then against the body, and as Zbyszko tripped over himself in trying to get out of range of the annoying tactics, Lewis leaped upon him and gained the fall.

The third and deciding fall took only five minutes and was executed with a neat head lock that stunned the Pole and made him helpless. The applause that followed the Lewis victory was tremendous. The crowd rose almost *en masse* and shouted itself hoarse for Lewis. His triumph proved most popular.

In this short history of heavyweight wrestlers, it would take many years to complete the story were we to give the details of each match, hence we touch only upon the most important contests, the outstanding ones. In the case of Stanislaus Zbyszko, who, like Strangler Lewis and Stecher, held the title on several occasions, it would not be doing him justice were we to omit his great matches with Ivan Poddubny and Reginald Siki, the Negro giant, Hans Steinke and Toots Mondt prior to the time he regained the crown from the head of Wayne "Big" Munn.

The first of these matches was with Poddubny and it took place in the Seventy-first Regiment Armory on March 8, 1925, and a gathering of 3,700 enthusiasts saw 492 pounds of struggling humanity maul away at each other for two hours to a draw.

"Zibby," who weighed only two pounds less than his Russian opponent, was forced to carry the battle to his mammoth rival. They were right at home in that, as it was the Pole against the Russian—natural enemies.

The affair itself was not a sensational one because of the tactics used by the matmen. The crowd repeatedly clamored for the referee to toss the men from the ring and one fan even ventured into the roped square to turn the trick himself. Poddubny used mostly the catch-as-catch-can methods while Zbyszko confined his holds to those above the waist. Poddubny on several occasions picked up Zbyszko and slammed him to the mat while his opponent brought agony to the Russian by the use often of arm locks and toe holds.

After the first hour and a half, each finding it impossible to gain a fall through the above holds, they resorted to the use of the headlock, but as the necks of "Zibby" and Ivan were wet with perspiration and were extremely large, the attempts failed. The bald head of Zbyszko was especially immune. It was as slippery as an eel.

It was the first time Poddubny and Zbyszko had met since their bout in England fifteen years before when Poddubny lost on a foul in the only defeat he ever suffered until pinned to the mat by Joe Stecher, in a bout for the world's title. Stecher, by the way, came

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all the way from Dodge, Neb., to see the ponderous pair maul each other.

Zbyszko seemed to be working out a carefully arranged campaign, which aimed to wear down his older opponent, but at the end of an hour, Poddubny was still boring in, the fresher of the two.

He even injected a touch of dramatics by resorting to the flying mare and three times in quick succession tossed Zbyszko over his head and to the mat with a resounding crash. Zibby also proved his great, amazing strength by taking to the same methods, but Poddubny invariably just slipped over Zibby's head.

When 1 hour and 15 minutes had been tolled off it looked as if they would groan along until daylight.

Poddubny almost got his man fifteen minutes later. He dropped him to the mat with a headlock and quickly turned to a punishing armlock and half-nelson. Zibby finally twisted free and literally spun out of it on his bald head.

So it continued to the end with neither gaining a fall.

Next came the match with Siki on April 17, 1923. That contest took place at the Mid-West A. C. Coliseum, and the giant Pole won in straight falls. He took the first in 1.07 of interesting grappling with a jackknife and head scissors and the second in 8.19 with a headlock and a jackknife.

During the first fall, Siki gave an interesting exhibition of defensive wrestling, his bridging particularly saving him from seeming defeat on several occasions. His great strength was also manifested as time after time he picked up his bulky opponent and slammed him to the mat with a resounding thud.

Offensively, the Negro's best hold was a combination arm lock. He clamped on the hold seven times and on two occasions Zbyszko broke the hold after strenuous efforts. On another occasion Siki secured a body scissors and wrist lock, but just when the Pole appeared destined to be thrown, he managed to work himself loose.

Siki, however, showed lack of experience. He started out at a terrific pace and used a lot of waste motion. As the fall wore on, Siki's strength began to wane and after they had been on the mat for one hour it was apparent the Pole was master of the situation. Zbyszko bided his time, finally worked his opponent into a position to secure the jackknife hold and then combined it with a head scissors for the desired result.

Siki was practically a beaten athlete when he appeared for the second fall. He had lost all his aggressiveness and Zbyszko started out to win the fall quickly. Only once did Siki gain the upper position and then for only a short time.

With that victory under the belt, Zbyszko started an extensive campaign to regain the world title from Lewis, but the Strangler



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denied him another return engagement with the statement that there were other more worthy opponents whose youth, agility and ability made them better drawing cards. Thus Zbyszko didn't receive the opportunity to get to the top again until after Wayne Munn had won the title from Lewis and the big Nebraskan accepted "Zibby's" defi.

The bitterest disappointment suffered by Zbyszko in the months between the time when he lost his crown and regained it from Munn, was his defeat at the hands of Hans Steinke at Dexter Park Pavilion of Chicago, February 7, 1924. The German won the fall and the match in 1.20.15 with a reverse body and arm hold. An agreement had been reached whereby one fall would decide the issue, Steinke holding out for such arrangement because he had agreed to wrestle catch-as-catch-can instead of Graeco-Roman, and figured he should have a little concession on that account.

The German was master of the situation at all times. His great strength enabled him to break holds with ease, and if he had known more about American methods of grappling he would have won more quickly. He surprised the fans by using body scissors and head locks. On several occasions he had the Pole in a bad way, by use of a powerful body scissors combined with a wrist or arm lock.

The unexpected defeat was keenly felt by Zbyszko, who was more eager to win than in any match of recent years. After Referee Charley Levine had declared Steinke the winner, the Pole rose and punched the German. The referee separated them and then Zbyszko protested the fall. To all appearances Zbyszko was pinned, and the referee, therefore was correct in his ruling. The German was carried to his dressing room on the shoulders of admirers.

Following that bout, "Zibby" tackled the tough Toots Mondt in a two out of three falls match staged by Doc Krone at the Coliseum. The Pole won two falls, the final coming after Mondt had struck Zbyszko while both were in a standing position.

Zbyszko took the first fall in 46:55 with a toe lock after some interesting grappling. Both secured dangerous locks at various times, but after the Pole had broken a toe hold he secured a similar lock on the Cowboy, who conceded the fall.

Mondt won the second fall with a jackknife hold in 14:40. The fall came unexpectedly, as Zbyszko had all the better of the grappling up to the time Mondt secured the hold. The Pole brought the Cowboy to the mat several times with arm locks and it seemed that he would be a sure winner until Mondt reversed the tables.

In the third and deciding fall, the men had been on the mat only eight minutes when Mondt floored Zbyszko with a right swing after he had broken loose from an arm lock. It appeared to be a deliberate foul and Referee Emil Thiry immediately disqualified Mondt and gave the fall and match to Zbyszko. Mondt was hissed and booed and had to be escorted to his dressing room.

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Chapter XXV

# Munn Crowned King

IT will be remembered that on March 3, 1922, Lewis regained the heavyweight crown from Zbysko at Wichita Falls, Mo., in two out of three falls, and for a year, the Strangler looked invincible. In fact, it wasn't possible for the promoters to dig up an opponent for him worthy of a championship match until the name of Wayne "Big" Munn appeared on the horizon. He was the first of four famous athletes who made history at the University of Nebraska.

Munn, who had approached greatness as a lineman on the Nebraska eleven, didn't know much about boxing nor about wrestling, but he was strong as an ox and was persuaded to enter both fields. He achieved his wrestling championship on sheer strength. His determination to take up boxing again after he had lost the mat title to Zbyszko was shattered by a quick knockout at the hands of Andre Anderson and he was stricken with horror at the murder of Anderson shortly after Andre had gained that victory.

Anderson, according to a story never proved but widely rumored, had been put on the spot by some thugs for having refused to "take a dive" in the Munn fight, to enable a big gambling coup of which Munn had absolutely no knowledge. In fact, Munn, after the murder of Anderson, spent considerable time trying to locate the gamblers who were said to have been implicated in the plot, but without success.

Munn's greatest fame as a professional came, of course, after his spectacular victory over Lewis in the world's heavyweight championship match at Convention Hall, Kansas City, Mo., January 8, 1925, when he literally tossed the Strangler out of the ring to win the title. Lewis let up a howl and demanded that he be awarded the match on a foul, but to the surprise of the spectators, who seemed to side with the Strangler, the referee ruled in Munn's favor and a new champion was crowned.

The result of that match had the same effect on wrestling in those days as has been experienced in the mat sport in this country during more recent years, when from three to five men claimed the title. Following Munn's victory, there were no less than five title claimants.

Munn was physically a giant. His chief reliance in the ring was not science, but brute strength. Six feet six inches tall, he at one time weighed 315 pounds, but reduced for his wrestling matches to 260, generally.




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He was born in the little town of Colby, Kan., in 1899. He moved with his family later to Fairbury, Neb. He attended the University of Nebraska from 1916 to 1918, and during that time was a star lineman on the football team. He participated in the 1917 game with Notre Dame, which was defeated, 7 to 0. He left the University to join the army, and while at Camp Pike was a lineman on the all-star football team that made a clean sweep in the Southern army camps.

After returning from France, where he saw active service, Munn became an automobile salesman in Omaha. In 1924 he turned again to sports and decided to become a boxer. His career was brief and tragic. At that time he weighed 315 pounds, but reduced forty-six pounds to meet Jack Clifford, who knocked him out in two minutes. It was then that he decided upon wrestling.

During his career, Munn had also mixed in many varied activities. He was at one time a teacher, a clown and even preached a sermon in a Kansas City church. He studied medicine at the University of Nebraska and took a turn on the vaudeville stage.

Now for the details of the Munn-Lewis match and the Munn-Zbyszko contests.

There is a biblical saying to the effect that the fellow who draws a sword shall perish by a sword; and it was just that sort of retributive justice that befell Strangler Lewis, master of the bruising, bone-crushing headlock, when he lost his title of heavyweight champion of the world to Munn, in Kansas City, Mo., on January 8, 1925. Wayne, in a titular match, scored two falls out of three over the redoubtable "Strangler," and sent him to a hospital to boot.

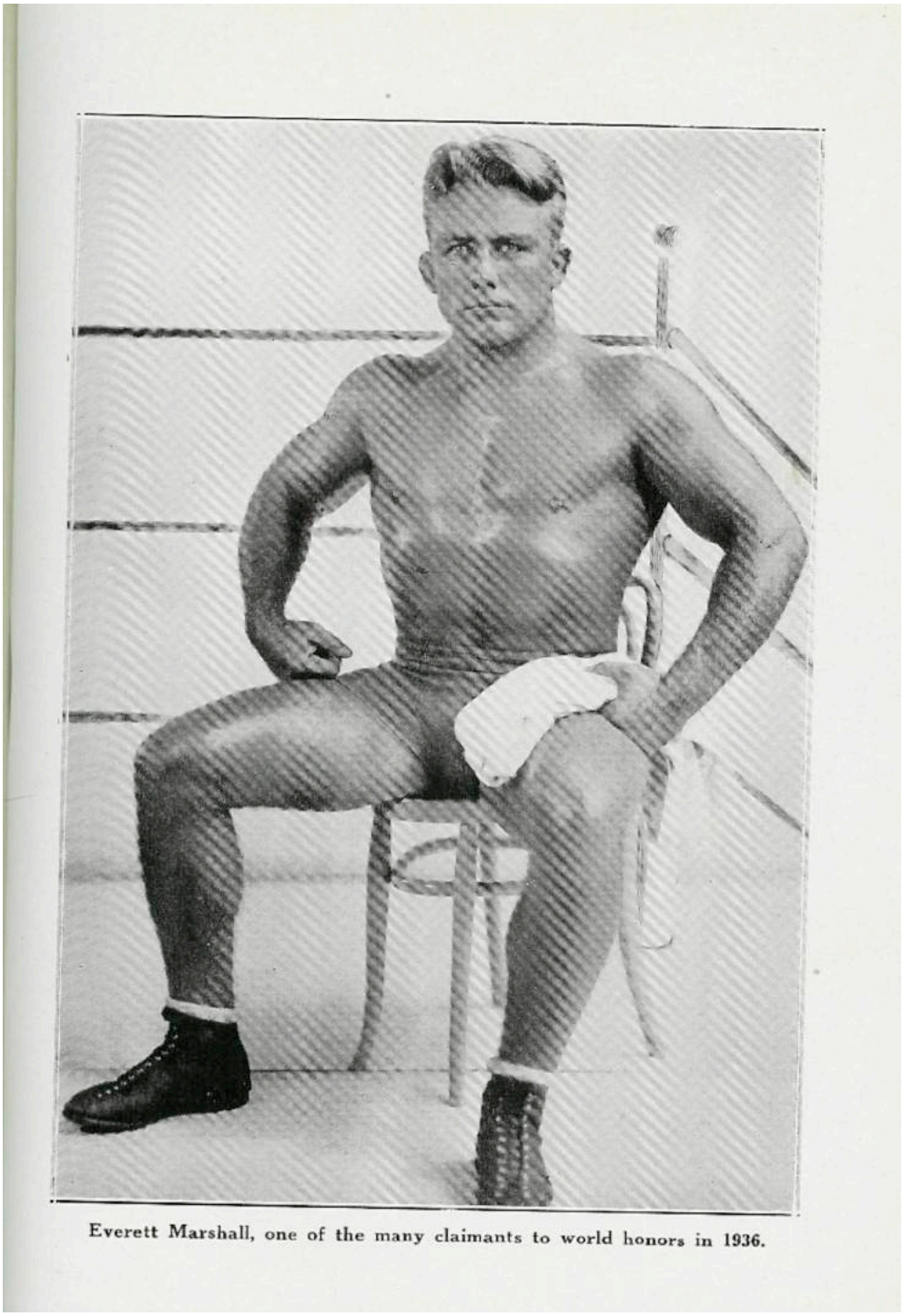
Munn thereby fulfilled his part of the biblical saying about the fellow who draws the sword and who must perish by the sword, for Lewis had been the man in other days who sent his opponents on the mat to hospitals, sanitariums and bonesetters after he had finished wringing their necks.

The passing of the heavyweight grappling championship from Lewis to Munn was as spectacular and dramatic as it was wholly unexpected. It is true that Munn's physique had won him many admirers, but when it came to matching his wrestling skill with the wrestling skill of the champion, it was like a kindergarten pupil trying to outwt a school principal. Lewis, as wily as he is powerful, past master of every trick of the game by reason of his long experience, brought a wealth of wrestling lore and wrestling craft into the Kansas City ring, whereas Munn brought but one thing—brute strength.

And that brute strength, residing in a huge bulk of a man, was enough to humble Lewis and to send him, humiliated and defeated, to a hospital couch with the possibility that his wrestling days were forever finished.

Lewis' chief stock in trade—his deadly headlock—with which he

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Everett Marshall, one of the many claimants to world honors in 1936.


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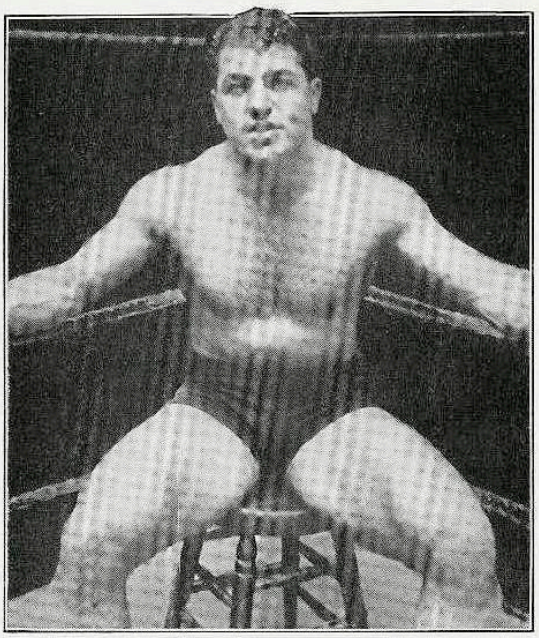
Toots Mondt, a veteran promoter, manager and wrestler. Mondt has been associated with Jack Curley in many big sporting ventures.

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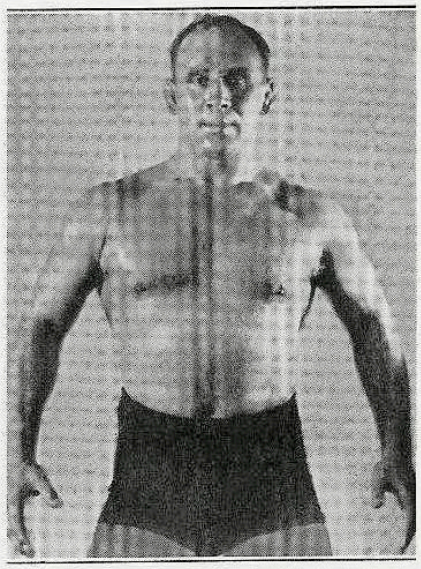


Jack Curley, dean of American wrestling promoters, who has just completed forty years in wrestling and other sports. He promoted the famous Gotch-Hackenschmidt matches and other great international contests in this country.


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Joe Savoldi, whose defeat of Jim Londos brought him national recognition. Savoldi was a great football star before joining the pro wrestling ranks.



Matros Kirilenko, the Russian Cossack, who was a clever showman.

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has inflicted terrible punishment upon many a grappler, sending some of them for medical and surgical aid after he had gotten through with them, was entirely ineffectual against Munn. The big fellow simply shook Lewis off as a water spaniel would shake off a dock rat. Whenever the "Strangler" crooked his arm and clamped it about Munn's head, Wayne simply braced himself on his muscular haunches and wrenched himself free by the simple process of twisting his head from side to side and tossing his huge shoulders this way and that until Lewis' hold was broken.

Munn's knowledge of the fine points of the wrestling game were almost nil. It was only a few months before that he was trying to box but was knocked over a couple of times and decided that he was unfitted for the pugilistic game. So he went in for grappling, and up to the time that he met and overcame Lewis, he seemed to have learned little more than how to apply a crotch and body hold. This was all he needed.

Before beating Lewis, Munn had downed several other very good grapplers, and always it was the crotch hold that paved the way for his victories. Munn always got his men by grasping them at the crotch and around the torso, lifting them high in the air over his head and then dashing them to the floor of the ring. This method stunned the luckless adversary, and while he was listening to the peeping of the birdies, Munn would fall on him and hold his quivering shoulders to the mat.

It was in this manner that Munn obtained his first fall over Lewis. He accomplished it in twenty-one minutes, with a crotch and body hold, lifting the "Strangler" clear off the floor, throwing him down heavily and then fastening his shoulders to the padded canvas.

The second fall came rather quickly, but it was awarded to Lewis, as the latter claimed a foul when Munn again picked him up bodily in his arms and, raising him high over his head, dropped him outside the ring ropes. Lewis landed on the small projection of the platform outside the ropes and then crashed to the floor. He was not only badly shaken up, but appeared to be hurt.

Munn contended that he had not deliberately thrown Lewis out of the ring. He said he merely lifted up the 228-pound "Strangler" and was holding him aloft when Lewis wriggled out of his grasp and fell outside the ropes.

The referee ruled, however, that a foul had been committed by the former gridiron star, and so gave the second fall to Lewis.

The "Strangler" left the ring and retired to his dressing room saying that he was injured and could not continue the match. Referee Bates, however, gave him fifteen minutes in which to recover. The fifteen minutes were passed and five minutes more elapsed before Lewis returned to the mat prepared to go ahead with the match.


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The grappling had started for the third fall, and in less than a minute, Munn had again lifted Lewis off his feet and slammed him down with terrific force. Lewis manifestly was stunned and Munn pinned him.

Munn's feat was loudly and enthusiastically cheered by the crowd whose sympathies were with the big collegian from the start. Lewis as champion had earned many ill-wishers because of the brutality of his head lock, with which he crushed so many opponents into submission and there appeared to be few who wanted to see him emerge victorious.

The day after the match Lewis was obliged to go to a hospital for treatment, with a serious spine injury.

In February, only three weeks after he had won the title, Wayne accepted a challenge from Stanislaus Zbyszko and successfully defended the crown at Kansas City. He then beat Pat McGill, Alex Lunden and Howard Cantonwine and, just when it appeared he would have a long term as champion, he came to his defeat at the hands of Zbyszko in a return engagement.

Munn didn't last long as title holder. His reign was cut short by the veteran Pole, just a few days after three months from the time that the Nebraska athlete had downed Lewis. By regaining the world title, Zbyszko astonished the wrestling world, for few fans had given the half century old challenger a chance against his bigger and much younger opponent. The Pole looked like a pigmy beside the enormous collegian, yet his vast experience and his science overcame the physical handicaps to enable him to toss the champion.

Zbyszko, who had been champion before, obtained the title for the second time in two straight falls. The first one occurred at the end of 8 minutes and 11 seconds with a forearm hold. After a short rest, the grapplers returned to the mat and in 4 minutes and 53 seconds Munn's shoulders hit the mat for the second time; a forearm and hammerlock being employed.

Munn was banking on his favorite crotch hold, the one with which he lifted Lewis high above his head and hurled him out of the ring. But the veteran Zbyszko was wise to his tactics. He was fully prepared and warded off all the giant's attempts to attain it.

Meanwhile, "Zibby" was putting into play his years of experience and soon transferred his position from one of defense to offense, a situation which became immediately dangerous for the youngster. Munn tried a jiu-jitsu hold on numerous occasions, but they were but toys with which Zbyszko was accustomed and from which he easily extricated himself, only to leave a look of surprise on Munn's face.

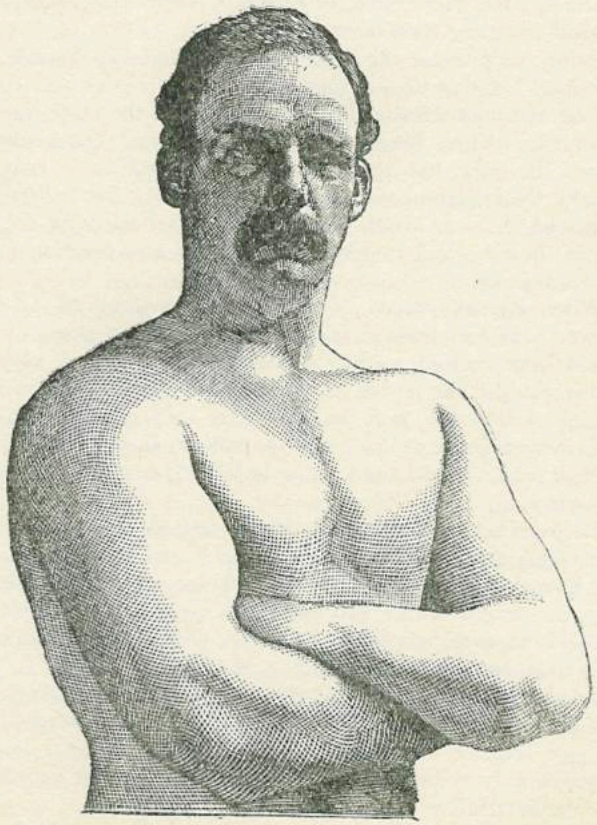
Stanislaus grappled for eight minutes, picked Munn up bodily and hurled him to the mat with a deafening thud. It was only a matter

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of a few seconds before the shoulders of the giant were stretched simultaneously on the floor.

The second fall was obtained in less time and with less effort. He lifted Munn from his feet to the length of his arm over his head, and again slammed him to the floor.

In 4 minutes and 53 seconds after the beginning of that period Zbyszko had secured his shoulders to the mat. The bout was over and the heavyweight wrestling title of the world had again changed hands.



**Walter E. Brown, champion police wrestler in the eighties.**



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Chapter XXVI

# Zbyszko's Short Reign

WHEN Zbyszko regained the world heavyweight title from Wayne "Big" Munn, in Philadelphia on the night of April 15, 1925, he brought to an abrupt close the short reign of the University of Nebraska athlete who had astonished the wrestling world by taking the title from Ed "Strangler" Lewis the previous January. Equally astounding to the mat world was the victory of the veteran Pole over his youthful collegian, for Zbyszko at the time was past the fifty-year mark and, although a giant himself, looked like a pigmy beside his big husky rival. But science was the biggest factor in deciding the winner and, in Zbyszko, Munn found one of the most finished wrestling stars of modern times.

Munn, despite his six feet six inches and 260 pounds which he scaled on the day of the battle, lacked experience and conclusively proved that as a wrestler he didn't belong in the same class with his opponent. When Munn tossed Lewis, it was brute strength that turned the trick, but against Zbyszko strength alone couldn't count because the Pole ranked among the best in that line. Against Lewis, it will be recalled, Munn won the first fall by tossing the Strangler out of the ring, and Lewis lost the second and deciding fall because he was injured.

When Zbyszko faced Munn, he was determined to regain the crown. He had trained faithfully and nothing short of a miracle would have sufficed, so far as Munn was concerned, so primed for battle was the foreigner. Zbyszko gained the championship in two straight falls. He won the first after only 8 minutes and 11 seconds with a forearm hold, and the second, in 4 minutes and 53 seconds, a forearm hold and hammerlock being employed to pin Wayne's shoulders.

In an effort to get his man, Munn shifted to jiu-jitsu at which he was adept, and tried desperately to get his man with a Japanese hold, but Zbyszko, aware of Munn's knowledge of the Jap style of wrestling, had trained himself to meet such type of competition and every hold Munn tried was ineffective. Zbyszko easily extricated himself, only to leave a look of surprise on Munn's face.

After eight minutes of grappling, Stanislaus lifted Munn up bodily, while the crowd gasped in astonishment, and before Munn could wriggle free, he was brought down to the mat with a thud. It then required only a few seconds for Zbyszko to pin the giant's shoulders for the first fall.

The second fall, as already stated, took about half the time and



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was gained with far less effort. Zbyszko lifted Wayne from his feet in the length of his arm over his head and again slammed Munn to the mat. He brought Wayne down in exactly four minutes and then it required only fifty-eight more seconds for Munn's shoulders to be pinned for the second and deciding fall. The bout was over and the world heavyweight mantle again rested on the shoulders of Zbyszko.

In the preliminary bouts that night Frank Pesek of Nebraska threw Frank Bruno of Lithuania five times in 39 minutes and 46 seconds, and Mike Romano, the same Mike who is still competing in the East, tossed Ivan Kantski in two falls.

Just as astonishing as was the fall of Munn after so short a reign, was the defeat of Zbyszko only one month and a half after he had rewon the title. This time it was Joe Stecher who regained the laurels which he had lost to Lewis back in 1920.

Joe and Stan clashed on Memorial Day, 1925, at St. Louis, and the scissors king emerged the victor in straight falls. The match was not a very exciting one because the men sparred too much, each being wary of the other. Zbyszko was in deadly fear of the scissors, judging by his tactics, and as a result, the match was devoid of the spectacular.

The first fall was gained in an hour and twenty-three minutes, when Stecher applied a full scissors on the rival and crushed his stomach until Zbyszko was forced to yield. Several times during the early part of the match, Stecher attempted the same hold but, before he could apply it effectively, Stan either ran out of it, or hugged his opponent in a manner that prevented execution of the hold.

On several occasions Zbyszko got a painful toe hold, his favorite, on Joe, but Stecher wriggled free. A full nelson by Zbyszko in 26.17 almost forced Stecher to the mat, but Joe freed himself and applied a headlock and then a hammerlock that proved agonizing for Stan.

Stecher won the second fall in short order. It took him just five minutes and again the famous scissors hold turned the trick. So badly used up was Stanislaus that it requires the services of his seconds to carry him to his dressing room. He complained bitterly about the pains in the stomach caused by the deadly squeeze but regained his normal form after a short rest.

Throughout the match, with few exceptions, Zbyszko's defense consisted in dropping on the mat and winding himself into a ball to escape the grim legs of the Nebraskan. In this fashion he would content himself by rolling around the ring, seldom making any pretense at attacking the challenger.

At the start of the second session, Zbyszko tried for a flying mare, but Stecher promptly grabbed him and squeezed him into submission. Although Zbyszko's shoulders were not pinned to the mat, he was held in such a vise that he was helpless and forced to concede the



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fall. In fact his shoulders were not pinned for either fall. On both occasions he was compelled to quit.

On that same day, another important match took place that will be mentioned here primarily because of its historic interest, and the fact that from a financial point of view, it takes its place among the record holders. It was the contest between Munn and Strangler Lewis at Michigan City, Ind. Lewis threw his opponent in the deciding fall with his famous headlock and thus avenged the defeat in which he lost the title.

The match was a fighting affair from the start, with action aplenty throughout. Munn early resorted to his old tactics of picking up his opponent and then slamming him around carelessly, but this time he found Lewis well trained to guard against the effects of such rough treatment. There was no question about Munn's superiority of strength, but he was woefully lacking in ability to cope with the veteran Lewis.

Munn was so badly treated in this engagement, that he had to be carried from the ring, as was Zbyszko in the St. Louis affair. Lewis set a record by applying twenty-one successful headlocks that had Munn dazed and wabbly.

Munn won the first fall in 24 minutes and 24 seconds with his favorite hold, the crotch hold. Lewis took the second 15 minutes with a headlock, after using the same hold four times previously with punishing effect.

The third and deciding fall was gained in 32 minutes and 12 seconds with another headlock. Both wrestlers were well used up at the time, but Lewis was far the stronger.

As many as 20,792 persons witnessed the affair and paid a total of $64,162, of which Lewis received $30,000.

The Zbyszko-Stecher match drew 15,471 persons for a gate of $51,670, of which Zbyszko received the lion's share under agreement.

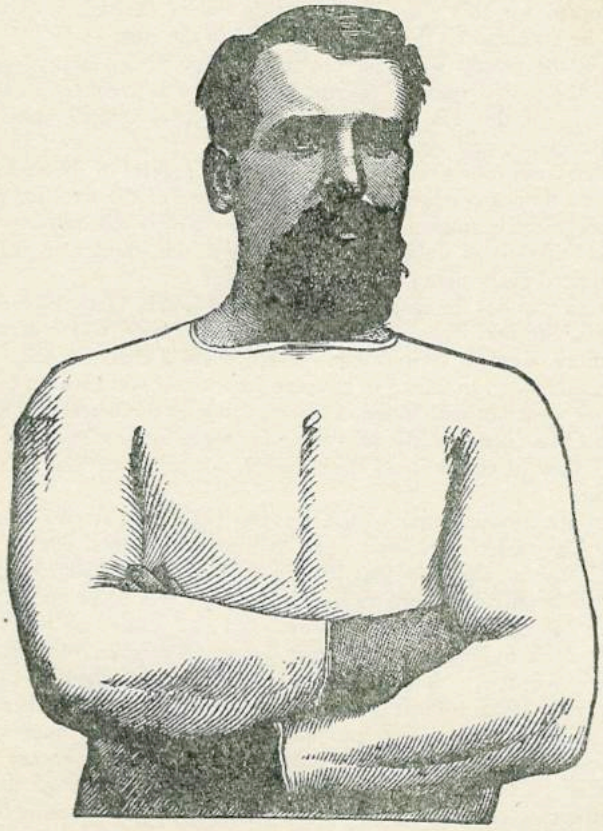
As Lewis had won the title from Stecher four years previously, and as the match between the Strangler and Munn had outdrawn the championship affair between Zbyszko and Stecher, the promoters figured that a Stecher-Lewis return engagement would go big and immediately negotiations were begun. But Stecher was not over-anxious to risk his crown against the headlock king so quickly, and decided to accept challenges from less dangerous, although worthy, opponents prior to taking on the Strangler again. Of these matches we will have more to say later.

Following his defeat and the loss of the crown, Zbyszko decided to tour the world and in an effort to obtain a return match with Stecher, and force the issue as the leading contender, he met all comers. It was during this year that he visited India to clash with the Great Gama, reputed to be the world's foremost wrestler, far

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greater than any man who had held the championship since the days of Gotch, and it was in that match with Gama that Zbyszko received the surprise of his life.

He was defeated in less than five minutes before a crowd of 100,000 persons, including the nobility of England. Zbyszko blamed his quick defeat on the slippery ground to which he said he was not accustomed, but didn't hesitate to sing the praises of Gama as one of the world's wonders in the mat sport. It was during 1926 that Stanislaus did his traveling and the following year he came to force himself into another championship match, but without success. In 1935 he retired to become a promoter in the Argentine Republic.



George W. Flagg, collar-and-elbow title holder of Vermont, in early period of American wrestling.



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Chapter XXVII

# Meets All Comers

UNLIKE present-day wrestling, in which champion, topnotcher, and mere novice may take part in an exhibition or a match as the affair may be billed almost every night in the week, in the days of the mat sport which we have reviewed to date, such was not the case. In those contests, if a champion was billed to clash with an opponent, his title was at stake. There were no exhibitions such as the New York State Commission and other bodies ruling the sport have adopted for this era. When a title holder desired to exhibit himself, he appeared on the stage instead of in the ring.

That is the reason why the titular matches, in the heavyweight ranks of the period recently discussed, were not as frequent as they are today. In this era of frenzied finance, prearranged matches, many champions, and syndicate promotion in wrestling, we find the stars billed from four to six times a week, with several of the matches booked one thousand miles apart; and in the case of the wrestler who is the recognized champion in the locality where he is scheduled to appear, his "title" is at stake every time he wrestles, though in reality it is protected every time he faces an opponent.

But such was not the case in the days when Gotch, Hackenschmidt, Ed Lewis, Stecher, Zbyszko, Munn, Jenkins, Roeber, and others of their calibre, were in their prime. Then, when a championship was at stake, there was no telling in advance who would win because every challenger went out with blood in his eyes to gain the laurels. That's why the titular bouts of the past were far more interesting from the point of view of competition, even though not so spectacular as they are today.

When Joe Stecher regained the heavyweight crown from Zbyszko, he, like his predecessors, was open to meet all comers, but he announced that as the field was limited to high-class challengers, he would tackle only such men as had gained the right to be considered standing ace high in their profession, and that unless an opponent was acceptable to him on such a basis, he would refrain from placing his title in jeopardy. And he strictly adhered to that schedule. During the year 1926, following his victory over Zbyszko, Stecher defended his title only twice, and on the occasion of an announced third defense of his laurels, he refused to go on when his money was not placed on the line on the night of the match. Throughout the year, he competed in many parts of the country in announced exhibitions, but only twice in scheduled championship matches, both of which he won.



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The first match in which Stecher defended his title was against the big, bulky form of Ivan Poddubny on February 1, 1926, in the Seventy-first Regiment Armory, and the mighty Ivan succumbed to the abdominal squeeze in 1 hour, 38 minutes and 48 seconds. The hitherto invincible Russian, who had been rolling up a string of victories in America, had his shoulders pinned with a body scissors and an armlock before a gathering of 10,000 persons who paid close to $25,000 to watch the fun.

Because of the reputation of the Russian, who had not tasted defeat in many years, a most colorful crowd was present, and included in the gathering were the sporting élite. Newspapermen from several Eastern cities, three from Nebraska, Missouri and Illinois, and famed wrestlers from near and far were at the ringside, their appearance giving to the match the importance which it deserved. Like the Carpentier-Dempsey bout of a few years previous, the Stecher-Poddubny contest was an international match of more than ordinary importance. It was a test between the two greatest wrestlers of that time—Europe's undefeated master and America's lord of the mat—and as things turned out, the match was one hundred per cent up to expectations.

It was a most uproarious crowd that saw the Nebraska boy retain his laurels. Though Poddubny was beaten, the bedlam which followed his fall was in a considerable measure in his honor. He put up a magnificent battle, and in the opinion of the experts, it was age that defeated him. Likewise, he conducted himself both during and after the match as a good sportsman, and that was not lost on the crowd.

When Joe Humphreys entered the ring, as Poddubny and Stecher were on their way down the aisles, Joe motioned to Georges Carpentier to come in for an introduction and he was wildly acclaimed. But the cheering for him was nothing compared to the wild ovation that greeted the matmen a few moments later.

The finish came after two long dramatic minutes in which the masterly Stecher tried just about every hold known to science, slipping from one to the other with dazzling speed, but all the while keeping his rib-crushing scissors clamped on the huge abdomen of his opponent. During these tense moments, Referee Eddie Forbes lay flat on his stomach at the side of the wrestlers, that he might better see when the shoulders of the giant Russian finally touched the mat.

The crowd sensed the end long before it came, since Stecher had at last achieved his favorite hold, and the bull strength which had repeatedly saved his opponent was rapidly ebbing. The policemen stationed to keep the aisles clear were helpless before a massed formation that leaped forward as soon as the killing was in evidence. The



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crowd milled around the ring, and when Ivan's shoulders finally touched the mat, a riot followed. Stecher first took an armlock and then a bar-nelson and wristlock, while Poddubny's little manager danced about the ring screaming something in Russian, which apparently Ivan didn't hear or couldn't heed.

Three times did the sweating, red-faced Russian raise himself a few inches from the mat, but in spite of his tremendous power, he was slowly forced back by Stecher, who, though he weighed 202 pounds, appeared tiny alongside the Russian's 248-pound bulk. The terrible scissors, applied as only Stecher in his prime could apply it, made the huge Ivan breathe in gasps, while his face became purple with his efforts to break loose. It was all of no use. Youth and skill would be served and the veteran's time had come to savor the humiliation he had so often passed out to others.

At the outset Poddubny appeared to have the advantage. He was wonderfully strong and easily defeated Stecher's best efforts to get at him. Stecher, however, from the start was the aggressor and Ivan apparently held his rival's skill in high regard. He was flustered, while Joe was the picture of calm and methodical persistence.

Stecher wasted no energy in heroics, but set about the task of flopping the Russian in the shortest possible time. Ivan repeatedly sought to get the speedy Joe into his arms so that he could toss him to the mat, but those powerful legs of the Nebraskan frustrated his best efforts.

Time after time, Stecher would get Poddubny on the mat and sit with him in his lap, seeking to get on his favorite hold, but each time Ivan's strength prevented it. Twice Joe attained it, but on both occasions the grapplers were under the ropes and Joe's efforts counted for nothing.

At the end of an hour, the men were on their feet in the center of the ring. Poddubny was breathing hard. Stecher was calm, breathing easily. Both men were dripping with perspiration and Stecher's hair was plastered on his brow like a wig. Poddubny's knees were weakening. His age was beginning to tell.

Now Stecher was not having so much trouble getting his legs around him. But, still, he had not secured a really good scissors hold. Poddubny did everything by brute strength. He broke holds by force alone. He tried the old Graeco-Roman wrestling holds on Stecher, only to be tossed out of position by Stecher's ever handily placed legs.

Stecher was on the floor fourteen times for fourteen minutes and the Russian a total of fifteen times for eighteen minutes.

Joe's greatest difficulty in applying the body scissors was in combatting a peculiar and effective defense against it, for if Joe had Ivan on his hands and knees, the Russian would curl up with his head

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bent under him. If Joe went behind in his familiar sitting position and tried to wrap the scissors on from there, Poddubny would bring his knees up close to the chin or cleverly block Joe's legs with his own as they attempted to wrap themselves in a scissors.

The victory was most unpopular. A big portion of the crowd was Russian and considerable money was lost on Ivan's chances. The Russians, among whom were many from the Metropolitan Opera House, lost heavily on their hitherto invincible mat star. About four thousand persons were turned away. The police and firemen were called into action, so dense was the gathering outside the armory.

It was on April 3, 1926, that Stecher got into a tough spot in Boston when he refused to go through with a match in which he was billed to defend his title against an "Unknown." When Joe got to the Hub, he found that he not only was unable to collect his $12,500 guaranteed him by the promoter, but that he also was being tricked, by being asked to meet Joe Malcewicz instead of the "Unknown" agreed upon. Whereupon Joe and his brother manager, Tony, refused to permit the match to go on and quit in a huff.

Leon Burbank, the referee, riled at Stecher's action, declared the heavyweight title vacant, but his decision was ignored by wrestling fans throughout the country, the majority of whom admitted that Stecher's decision to quit the ring was warranted by the facts. For the benefit of the record, I produce here the statement of Tony Stecher, following the Hub trouble:

"Joe and I came on from California at the request of two Eastern promoters, one of whom offered Joe a championship match in Boston and the other in Philadelphia. As we were guaranteed $12,500 for the Hub match and $10,000 for the bout in Philadelphia, I accepted both on Joe's behalf and we headed eastward. In Boston we were informed that we would meet a wrestler called "The Unknown," but who in reality was Jake Bressler of Des Moines, whom Joe figured to beat quite easily, and in Philadelphia, Joe was to tackle Wladek Zbyszko.

"We got to Boston on the day before the match and went to the promoter and asked him for the guarantee which was to have been paid to us two days before the bout. He pleaded that he couldn't give it to us then but that we should return in the evening. I did so, and again he stalled.

"He asked me to come back in the morning, which I did, and again he failed to make good. Then he requested that I come to his office in the evening at 6:30, but instead, I arrived at 4:30 and I waited all evening without result. I felt that I was being given a run-around, and I told him so.

" 'Look here, Tony,' said the promoter, 'I got that money right here in the safe, but there's a lot of wise guys out there and I'm sure



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you don't want to go packin' that much jack around in your pockets. Besides, it would give the fans a great treat to have me give Joe his money in the ring when the bout is about to begin.'

" 'Never mind that,' I replied, 'I can take care of myself. We want that money now or there will be no match.'

"But he was so persistent that I agreed and then asked him who would referee. He told me the name of the man and the official, whom I knew well, was agreeable to me. Then he confided that the 'Unknown' was Jake Bressler of Des Moines, a fellow I knew, and I had no doubt, after learning that much, that we could hop aboard a train for Philly within half an hour after the match would begin.

"In the evening, we got to the hall early, and at nine o'clock we walked out in the arena and to the stage, where the referee who we were told would officiate, met us, and also Bressler, who took a seat opposite Joe. We waited for the promoter to come in with the money but no promoter was in sight. I told Joe to wait and I hunted all over the place, but no promoter was around. Then I became leery and realized we were being duped.

"However, we were still prepared to go through with the match in order not to disappoint the spectators, because Joe was cocksure of victory; but, as if by magic, Bressler suddenly disappeared and so did the referee. I looked down the aisle, and there I saw both sprinting towards the dressing rooms. And while they were doing that, into the ring came a young, athletically built, handsome fellow in civilian clothes.

"I looked up in amazement, as he stood in the center of the ring and doffed his civilian clothes, underneath which was a wrestler's outfit. This fellow undoubtedly had been planted in the front row, all prepared for the 'emergency,' for he had his ring clothes under his street garments—which was rather unusual. I learned that his name was Joe Malcewicz, and that in New York he had appeared under the Jack Curley banner as a Russian Jew.

"Hopping into the ring with him was another man, who walked over to Joe and said:

" 'I'm the referee. Come out and let's get started.'

" 'Started!' shouted I in anger. 'What do you mean? Who are you?'

" 'I'm the referee,' he replied, 'and I want to get this match under way.'

" 'There'll be no bout,' I replied, 'because you're not the referee who was appointed to handle the contest and he's not the man Joe is scheduled to meet.'

" 'He certainly is,' this newcomer replied, 'he's the Unknown and I'm the official referee.'

" 'Huh,' I snickered, 'you're not dealing with two hicks, you're up

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against two slick Nebraska farmers. We're too smart for you. You'll not job Joe out of his title tonight.' And with that I ordered Joe out of the ring, thereby starting a riot. But it wasn't our fault. The plan apparently was to get the slick referee either to disqualify Joe for some supposed foul or else to see that Malcewicz, through some means within the power of the referee, was declared the winner and new champion. But the scheme didn't work.

"I tried to find the promoter so that we could get our money, after which I would have permitted Joe to tackle both Bressler and Malcewicz in the same ring, but the promoter outsmarted himself. What made me so mad was that city slickers thought they could put it over on two farmers! With that referee we would have had as much of a chance of retaining the title as a halfwit has in a chess match.

"In so far as Malcewicz is concerned, my brother beat him half a dozen times without getting up a sweat, and I offered a $10,000 side bet that he wouldn't last half an hour against Joe in a match with a capable impartial referee as third man in the ring.

"Job us! Huh, it made me laugh."

Such was the story of Stecher's brother-manager, a story borne out in full by reporters who had covered the affair and knew the insides of the job that was to have shorn Stecher of his crown. So peeved was Stecher at his treatment, that on the following day when he clashed in Philadelphia with Wladek Zbyszko, he went at his job with a vim and held the upper hand throughout. The contest lasted forty-eight minutes, with Joe winning. Then came Stecher's match with Dick Daviscourt in New York the following week.

The head scissors, a headlock and—curtains! Such was the case when Joe Stecher defended his title against Daviscourt in the Seventy-first Regiment Armory of New York City on March 22, 1926. It was a tough match in which the Scissors King required fifty minutes and fifteen seconds to pin his rival's shoulders, but most of those who witnessed the affair were of the opinion that Joe could have won within the half hour had he been so disposed. In fact, so displeased was the gathering with Stecher's work that he received a severe razzing when he left the ring.

Daviscourt, who, like Lewis, was master of the headlock, slapped many of them on Stecher, but Joe got out of each without much damage being done. The end came with dramatic suddenness. Daviscourt, who lacked nothing in aggressiveness, tried for a leg hold and Stecher pounced on him with a headlock and wrist lock. A moment later, Joe had his hook scissors working across the body and Daviscourt was shortly groggy. The challenger tried desperately to rally, but Stecher had him and it was just a question of how long Dick could hold out.



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On several occasions, Stecher kept his body scissors on his rival for upwards of three minutes. Joe successfully got that famous hold on Daviscourt seventeen times during the match and weakened Dick considerably.

In the first preliminary, Jim Londos appeared against Ivan Linow and, so splendid an exhibition did the Greek Adonis give, that the announcement was made that he would be the next opponent for the champion. There was considerable bickering over the match, both New York and Philadelphia putting in a bid for it. The Quaker City finally got it, and it was on June 10, before an enthusiastic gathering of about ten thousand persons, that Stecher again came through with the crown still on his head.

That bout, as Joe often declared after he had retired, was the toughest in which he had engaged. In speaking of the affair, Stecher said:

"With all due respect to all of the wrestlers who faced me in the many years of my ring activity, I don't think any bout in which I engaged was more viciously fought, and forced me to use up more energy, than the strenuous engagement with Londos in Philadelphia in 1926. It required an hour and fifty minutes and thirty seconds before I emerged the victor, and I must admit that, on several occasions, I didn't think I would retain my title."

The affair was held in the Municipal Stadium and was won by Stecher with a body scissors, after the Greek Adonis had forced the wrestling most of the way and had Stecher in a tight squeeze at least a dozen times. The men had wrestled for twenty-two minutes when Londos suddenly got his famous wrist lock on Stecher and forced Joe down to the canvas. As Stecher hit the mat, Londos leaped to one side and quickly obtained a headlock on Joe. Jimmy had his opponent in agony for seven minutes before Stecher could release himself.

But he didn't remain free long, for Jimmy pounced on him, secured a toe hold, and later converted that into a leg spread that was agonizing for the champion. The Greek Adonis held that hold for four minutes and kept asking the champion whether he would give in but, getting no affirmative reply, Londos applied a vicious twist after each query. Once he was admonished by the referee because he used his knee as a pivot. He was told to drop that procedure and apply only a free movement.

When Stecher finally broke away, he caught Londos with a body scissors and kept squeezing but to no avail. He then got a toe hold and later secured a grip on both toes and to the delight of the spectators, rowed the boat with Jimmy as the vessel. But Londos evened matters soon after by obtaining a hammerlock on the champion and holding on for three minutes. There was no denying that, for every

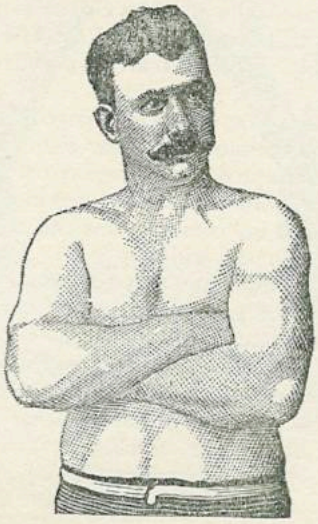
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tough hold Stecher got on the Greek, Londos retaliated with three, and that the bulk of the attack was credited to Jimmy.

At one time Londos complained bitterly that Stecher had the dreaded strangle hold on him, but the referee kept ruling that Jimmy himself was making it a strangle by forcing his head upwards in an effort to get the official to force a release, but in that he was mistaken, and he suffered accordingly. When he finally broke loose, he caught Stecher by the right wrist and, in a straight arm pull, Jimmy tossed him over his head and, in a jiffy, pounced on his prey and executed a Japanese leg lock on him.

In that way, they went for almost two hours, with the Greek having by far the better of the argument. Several times in the last thirty minutes, Stecher was within a hair's breadth of being tossed. In fact, once it seemed that Joe's shoulders had both been down for the required time, but the referee declared to the contrary, much to Londos' chagrin. The crowd hooted but the referee held his own.

That match proved one thing—it showed that Londos was coming up as the leading light in wrestling and that, ere long, he could become the chief menace to the champion and other topnotchers. He showed that he was a shrewd, colorful, powerful wrestler, well versed in all the technique of the sport, and that he knew how to play to the gallery. It was not long thereafter that he finally did reach the top and become the greatest drawing card since the days of Frank Gotch. Of that we shall say more in a subsequent chapter.



**Charles Flynn, who held Illinois crown in early eighties.**



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Chapter XXVIII

# More Stecher Triumphs

DURING the rest of the year and for the greater portion of the next year, Stecher went from state to state to give exhibitions. Where the rival had considerable local color, the bout was billed as for the heavyweight championship, but in other spots, it was termed an exhibition.

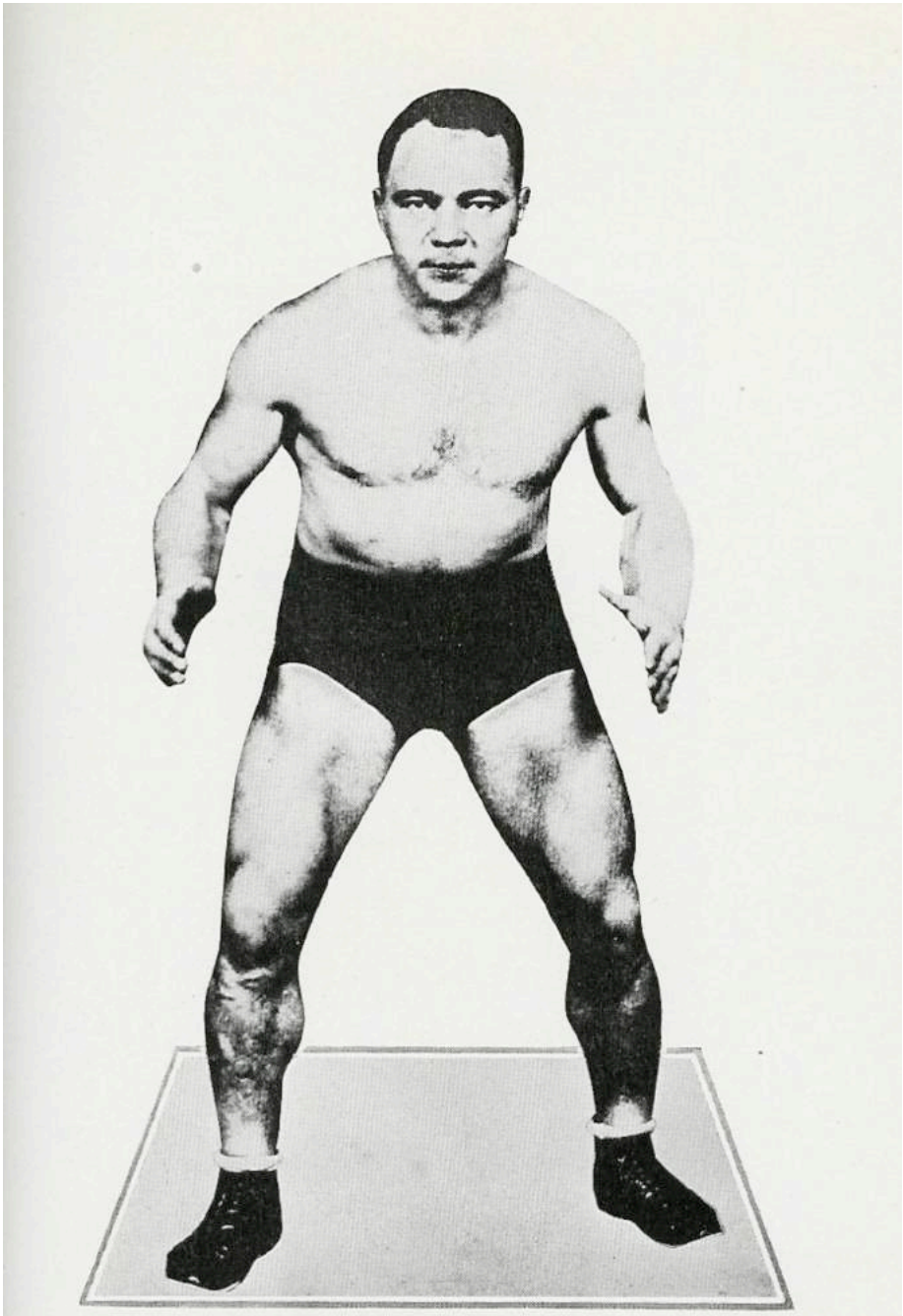
During those days Joe put a number of would-be stars out of the running. Twice within a stretch of four months he sent his opponent to the hospital as a result of applying the body squeeze too tightly. One of such victims was John Pax of Philadelphia, who ventured out to Kansas City to tackle the champion and found himself fit for medical attention after he had been thrown. The second was Charley Benthrop of Little Rock, whom he beat at Chattanooga. It was after that bout that Stecher announced he would make his final tour of the East and then retire, but after a survey of possible opponents, he decided he could add to his fortune by continuing as long as he held the title, and that was the procedure which he followed. Joe would have retired in the spring of 1927 but for one person—his rival, Strangler Lewis. Lewis tried to get a return bout with Stecher, but Joe repeatedly declared himself against such a contest unless the Strangler first eliminated all who had a chance to gain the crown. It was Joe's contention that Lewis had held the title several times, and had been in the spotlight so often that Joe preferred to favor a newcomer in the ranks.

That angered Lewis, who openly challenged Stecher for a championship match with a ten-thousand-dollar side bet, which Joe turned down. Lewis then accepted a challenge from big Wayne Munn, former titleholder, and, with a series of headlocks, tossed the Nebraskan in Chicago, the first fall coming at the end of fifty-seven minutes and the second in twelve, both with headlocks. There were more than ten thousand persons present and they paid twenty-six thousand dollars to see the match, and when the bout was over, Lewis, addressing them, declared that, by beating Munn, who had tossed him two years previously, the Strangler had clinched the world title because Stecher refused to defend it against him. To further strengthen his claim, he put up his diamond-studded ten thousand-dollar belt as a forfeit to defend the title against any man, Stecher preferred.

It was this incident that riled Stecher and decided him on the course of continuing in the sport. While touring the South, taking on all comers, he decided to accept the challenge of Jim Browning, and two weeks after the match that put Benthrop on the disabled list, Stecher



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Gus Sonnenberg, former Dartmouth football star, who introduced the "flying tackle" to wrestling.


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Ray Steele, a sturdy California heavyweight.

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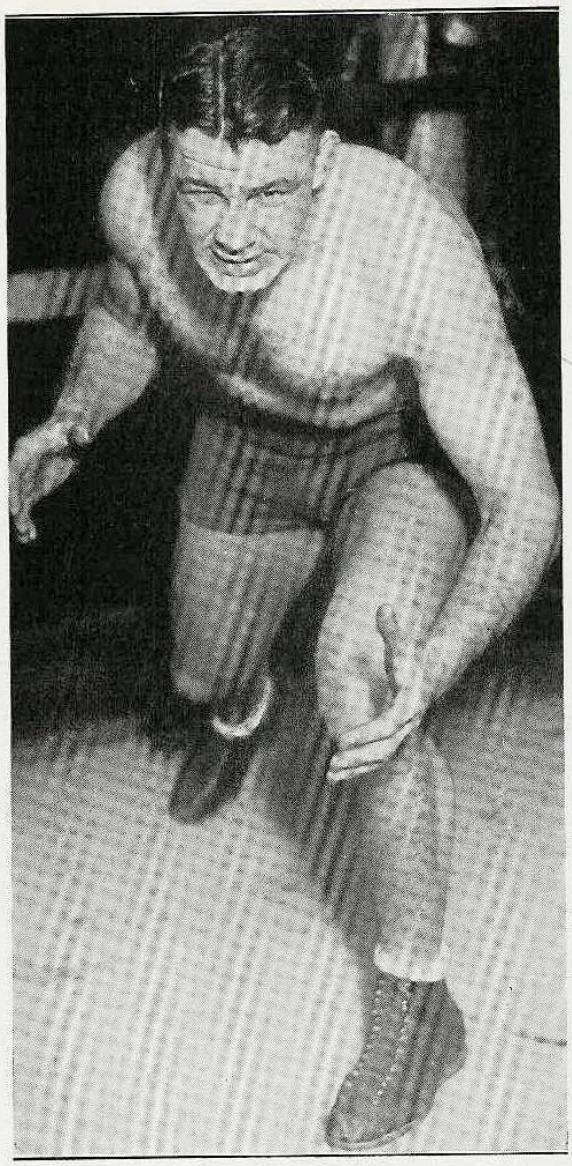


Earl McCready, one of the best heavyweights of recent years. He rolled up a splendid record in New Zealand.



Karl Pojello, one of the cleverest of the modern school of wrestlers.


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Jim McMillen, Illinois football star, a clever manipulator of the flying tackle.

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and Browning clashed at Atlanta, Georgia. It was that bout that first brought Gentleman Jim into prominence as a good prospect for championship timber.

The bout developed into the most spectacular one ever seen prior to that time below the Mason and Dixon line. It was staged on the night of February 17, and Stecher won; but his title hung in the balance several times. Only the champion's mat generalship saved him from losing the crown to his younger rival. Time after time, Joe was forced to save himself by crawling to the ropes after Browning got his famed hold on him.

The crowd was all for Gentleman Jim because of his aggressiveness and because, as usual, the challenger was the underdog, and every time Browning clamped leg cramps and punishing toe holds on Joe, the ten thousand spectators cheered to the echo. Stecher got a firm scissors about Jim's body quite frequently, but the younger challenger was able to survive them. Stecher was caught in the center of the mat twice in the first ten minutes with viselike grips that made him groan in agony and, finding himself unable to break loose, he slid on hands and stomach to the edge of the ring, so that the referee would be forced to separate them and free him from Jim's legs.

Stecher, weighing 218 pounds, obtained the first fall in forty-five minutes and ten seconds with a body scissors. Browning, scaling 226 pounds, gained the second fall in the quick time of 7.33 with a head scissors.

Then followed as severe gruelling wrestling as had ever been seen in the South, with each grappler determined to take the deciding fall. Stecher worked with a vim, despite punishing grips obtained by Browning.

After ten minutes of nip-and-tuck tussling, Browning got another head scissors on the champion and came within an inch of winning the title. When Stecher finally broke away, he pounced on Gentleman Jim and followed a hammerlock with a body scissors, and then with a full nelson and a leg split, all of which took much of the fight out of the challenger.

As the matmen were separated after working against the ropes, Joe suddenly tripped Jim, in a jiffy obtained a body scissors, and squeezed the body until he took all the breath out of Browning. Jim finally was forced to yield to the agonizing grip. He lay a helpless mass on the canvas when the referee touched Stecher to indicate the victory.

Joe knew he had been in a spot and, then and there, Browning became a menace to the rival heavyweights. Browning later informed me that match was his toughest and also gave Stecher the credit for being the greatest of the matmen since Frank Gotch's day.

Joe was bent on making all he could while the going was good



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and didn't hesitate to clash with any worthy fellow. After cleaning up in the South, both in exhibitions and in the titular match with Browning, the champion headed north and, in his first match, tackled Renato Gardini in the Seventy-first Regiment Armory. The bout took place nine days after the Browning mill, February 21, 1927, and drew a packed armory. Gardini, at the time, was one of the best wrestlers from across the Big Pond exhibiting his wares in this country, and had a big Italian following who cheered him to the echo throughout the match. He had a big margin on the Nebraskan until Joe actually pinned him and that brought great joy to the Italian's supporters.

The bout was the most thrilling staged in New York that winter. Gardini was below his best weight, scaling only 192 pounds against the 212 of his defender. For the first twenty-two minutes, Gardini had Stecher down on the mat eleven times and looked like a sure winner. He clamped every kind of a hold on the titleholder and proved to the satisfaction of the gathering that he was a master of wrestling technique.

Then, when things looked brightest for the challenger, Stecher suddenly broke loose, swung around and grabbed a toe hold on Gardini. It wasn't exactly the kind of a hold he wanted most, but helped considerably. Twists and groans kept the crowd on edge for about ten minutes, during which time Renato couldn't break loose. When he did free himself, he had lost much of his confidence for he had learned that the champion could hurt him.

Then followed some stand-up wrestling and this monotonous style was broken when the crown-wearer got his crushing legs about the midriff of the challenger. He held this for three minutes, when Gardini learned that he could lessen the grip by a simple process. He sat down and locked his hands beneath his knees and the Nebraskan was helpless in furthering the attack under that type of defense. It rendered the body scissors useless.

Referee Ernest Roeber was tossed when Gardini got to his feet and, while Stecher momentarily looked down on the official, Renato dragged Joe to the mat with an armlock. This he followed with a head scissors.

It cost the champion some pains to get out of this. He squirmed and kicked, but to no avail, until four minutes and seventeen seconds had been tolled off.

Stecher's entire number of holds for the evening could be counted on the fingers of both hands. He used his famed scissors and the toe hold most often. Never did he bestir himself until the Italian speeded him up into a whirling succession of flops to the mat under the urgence of reverse headlocks.

In that last minute, when Gardini started thrashing the champion

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around at so fearful a rate, the crowd went wild. The Italian element tossed paper and hats in the air, thinking the championship was about to be won by one of their countrymen. Three times Stecher's legs described large arcs through the air, to land with a resounding thud as the Italian worked himself into a Fascist frenzy.

On the third bounce, Stecher whipped his new red trunks around Gardini's middle in a plain, old-fashioned body scissors, and in about five seconds, the referee whacked the champion's back as Gardini, like a boy in a bear's embrace, was helpless while Stecher poked his shoulders to the canvas long enough to count a fall.

The crowd, which favored the Italian, couldn't believe it, and for seven solid minutes, the hoots and whistling were deafening while Jim Londos and Dick Daviscourt waited for their announcement. Thus ended Stecher's first big match in New York since regaining the title.

Following that contest, Stecher appeared in several other bouts in New York City during the year, but the only contests of any consequence were those with Wladek Zbyszko and a return engagement with Browning, both of which were thrillers.

It was about one month after Stecher had successfully defended his title against Renato Gardini, that Jack Curley booked Wladek Zbyszko for him. Stecher was a popular wrestler with the New York fans, and when he faced Zbyszko in the Seventy-first Regiment Armory, fire laws had to be put into operation to prevent possible danger to the spectators, for more than 8,000 spectators were jammed into the armory and several thousand more couldn't gain admittance because of police regulations.

Zbyszko, it will be remembered, was a claimant to the throne over which Stecher ruled, and the Nebraska farmer didn't like the attitude taken by Wladek. It took considerable effort on the part of Monsieur Curley to arrange the contest because of the enmity between the camps, but Stecher was anxious to prove his sole right to the title and after considerable bickering the match was made, with the result that Wladek was eliminated from the field of championship claimants, thus leaving only Stecher as rightful heir.

The Titans of the mat sport battled in thrilling style, and thunderous applause that greeted almost every move, showed with what vim the boys were trying to toss each other. It was a contest of thrills from start to finish. Each was on the alert at all times and never a moment during the entire affair was there any stalling. It was a shooting match such as seldom had been seen in New York since the days of Frank Gotch.

They put up a hard fight, neither giving ground without making his opponent battle every inch of the way for the advantage. The facial expressions on each indicated keen suffering as headlocks, toe



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holds, body scissors, armlocks, half and full nelsons and the hammerlock were applied, one right after the other. Probably no match in recent years saw so many holds used as in that contest.

Three successive flying mares executed by the giant Pole spelled his own doom. They seemed to get on the great Nebraskan's nerves and he went after Wladek with a vengeance. First Joe got a half nelson on Zbyszko and as Wladek was attempting to get out of it, Joe caught the wrist of the left arm and twisted the arm far behind the back for a hammerlock. As Zbyszko fell to the ground, in a jiffy, Joe flung himself on top of the Pole and obtained a toe hold that caused Wladek excruciating pain.

That was the start of a series of painful holds that eventually wound up with Stecher retaining his title. Joe followed that with a body scissors and when Wladek got out of that, a head scissors and a straight arm hold followed, and then came a leg split. After maintaining that on Wladek for two minutes, Zbyszko kicked loose, but as he attempted to get off the floor, Stecher obtained a body scissors and squeezed so hard that Wladek was pinned.

The crowd cheered both matmen as seldom wrestlers had been greeted by New York fans. They appreciated the efforts of each and knew that they had just seen one of the best, most scientific, and hardest fought matches witnessed in New York in many moons. The time of the bout was 44 minutes and 57 seconds.

It will be remembered that when Stecher went on his barnstorming trip around the country, he clashed several times with "The Masked Marvel" in exhibitions. That masked one was none other than Peter Sauer, who was just coming up in the wrestling world after having conquered all the amateurs and collegians in the Middle West in A.A.U. championship tournaments.

He and Stecher appeared in what was advertised as a special bout in Atlanta, Georgia, on January 18, and the Masked Marvel went down in two falls in 27 minutes and 18 seconds and 6 minutes and 16 seconds respectively, after which they traveled down to Texas and later out in the Middle West, and on each occasion Sauer was readily defeated.

Then they both came East, and Sauer, in recognition of his services, was given a prominent place on the various cards that were topped by the champion. But in New York, Sauer, or the Masked Marvel, as he was known throughout the South, was billed by the name under which he now wrestles—none other than Ray Steele of California. It was on the Stecher-Zbyszko card that Steele was pitted against the up-and-coming Jim Londos, and their bout was almost as spectacular a struggle as was the headliner. The Mighty Greek played undertaker to Steele by putting the Western collegian out in 36 minutes and 41 seconds by a series of five successive flying mares that took the house by storm.

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Following his victory over Zbyszko, Stecher again went out on the road and gathered in plenty of shekels. He was most popular wherever he appeared and his pleasing performances gained him an army of friends throughout the country. On May 20, he again made his appearance in the East, a championship match, with Dick Daviscourt as his challenger. The place was Philadelphia and Dick, like all other challengers to date, was tossed in an hour, 36 minutes and 36 seconds. Daviscourt gave Joe the surprise of his career by the opposition he handed the champion.

Several times he had Joe in a bad state. On one occasion, after the match had gone 47 minutes, Dick suddenly got a body scissors on Joe, the master at this style of wrestling, and came within a fraction of an inch of pinning the champion's shoulders. When Stecher finally got out of the hold, he went after Dick and punished him severely with body scissors and toe holds. He got three scissors and seven toe holds on Dick within twenty minutes.

When the hour had been passed, both were on the verge of exhaustion but Stecher was in better trim and could stand the punishment better than could Daviscourt. Dick got a headlock on Joe at 1.11.14, and held it for more than five minutes. When Joe broke loose, he seemed stunned. He worked himself away from his adversary until he regained his senses and then began an attack that didn't let up until victory was assured.

A leg scissors was converted into a body scissors that Stecher pressed against his opponent for almost ten minutes to get Daviscourt to the point of collapsing. When the hold was finally released, the champion had no difficulty forcing Daviscourt into a head scissors grip which proved his downfall. He couldn't break clear and Joe wouldn't release the hold until the referee called the fall.

Like all his previous Eastern contests, Stecher's performance was well received. The huge crowd cheered him wildly. On the same card appeared Jim Browning, who later was to win the crown. Jim was pitted against George Calza whom he threw in 38 minutes and 39 seconds, with a body scissors following two flying mares.

The fine performance of Browning gained for him several lucrative matches around the country and finally resulted in his challenge to Stecher being accepted for a championship match in the Seventy-first Regiment Armory to inaugurate the fall wrestling season for Jack Curley. October 12 was the date and another overflow crowd made its appearance.

As in the previous two contests in New York in which the Nebraska scissors king had defended his laurels, the crowd again was treated to a thrilling tilt. In fact, the Gotham devotees of the sport were of the opinion that it was one of the greatest matches staged in the metropolitan district in years. Thrill after thrill kept the gather-



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ing on edge. Stecher with his body scissors had his match in Browning, with his equally effective scissors hold, which, although practiced at the time by Browning, was not yet known by its present-day name, the airplane body scissors.

It took the champion 52 minutes and 11 seconds to down his antagonist, but when he did, the end came with such suddenness that it almost knocked the fans breathless. Excitement was at high pitch so far as the main event was concerned, almost from the start. The fans were on their feet virtually throughout the fifty-two minutes of wrestling, cheering one and then the other of the struggling men as they alternately got punishing holds on each other.

Stecher tipped the beam at 215 and Browning at 220.

Added interest was given to the contest by reason of that fact that they had met once before, in Atlanta, Georgia, the previous spring and Stecher had emerged the victor.

In their New York engagement they battled along evenly for the first half hour, both being on the mat most of the time, each wrapped about the other in tangled confusion of arms and legs. The wily Stecher was constantly maneuvering to get his opponent into a position where Joe could put those powerful legs of his into play for that deadly body scissors. Browning succeeded in thwarting the Nebraskan during the early part of the match, and they then took to exchanging headlocks, bar- and wristlocks and toe holds without either gaining the advantage.

Then Browning got trapped into a Japanese scissors, a hold that pinned his left arm into the viselike crook of Stecher's left leg with punishing effect, and further secured it by an arm bar. Browning had a hard time of it and went through a period of intense suffering and struggling to free himself. When he did, he sent Stecher to the mat with a bar- and wristlock taken from a standing position. Stecher had hardly gotten out of that, than Browning leaped upon him and caught his head in a scissors lock that sent Joe down foremost to the mat. Twice again the Kansan turned that trick and Joe broke free only to fall into the clutch of another grip.

For the fourth time Browning tried a similar hold and succeeded, but following that Stecher's luck changed. Joe, as before, broke away, but instead of falling into another trap, this time he whirled around, wrapped his legs about Browning's waist and pinioned him. Then, using an armlock, he forced the cowboy's shoulders to the mat.

Thus ended another thrilling wrestling bout that kept adding to the interest in the sport in New York.

A few months previously, Stanislaus Zbyszko had returned from abroad where he had gone for a rest, following the loss of his title. He had then decided to give up wrestling and to devote his time to art and business, but like most athletes, the lure of the sport was too great and he returned to America to attempt to regain his lost laurels.

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For a time Stanislaus engaged strictly in training and then when he thought he had properly conditioned himself to meet the new, youthful, powerfully built fellows who had been taking up the sport, he placed himself in the hands of Emil Klank, who had handled Frank Gotch, and Emil issued a challenge on Zbyszko's behalf.

On the night of the Browning-Stecher bout, Zbyszko accepted Hans Steinke as an opponent to prove his right to a titular shot, and the bout, a twenty-minute limit affair, ended in a draw. It lacked the action that was expected from two such contenders and, as a result, Zbyszko lost considerable ground in his claim for a mill with Stecher.

It was then, when Zbyszko found himself unable to get a match for the crown, that he decided to embark on a trip to India to tackle the greatest wrestler since the days of Gotch and Hackenschmidt, Gama, the Tiger of the Punjab. With the consent of the Maharajah, the match was arranged for January 31, to be staged at Paddulo, that being the first time that permission was granted to an Indian star to meet a European star on native territory. Zbyszko and Klank sailed on the *Bankhead* for Marseilles, and from there they embarked again for India. Zbyszko received $8,000 and round-trip tickets for himself and Klank and, as was told in the story of Zbyszko's career, he met with defeat in one minute.

During the latter part of the year, Stecher found that worthy opponents for a championship contest were few and as a result, he engaged in a number of matches that were billed as titular affairs, but in which the competition was exceedingly weak. On December 2 he tackled Giovanni Raicevich of Italy at the Arena of Philadelphia and pinned the Italian's shoulders with a body and scissors hold in 29 minutes and 57 seconds and three days later, at the St. Nicholas Club of New York City, he tossed Jack Ganson, the Lithuanian grappler of San Francisco, in 42 minutes and 25 seconds. The champion retained his crown by pinning his adversary's shoulders to the mat with a full body scissors and body hold after 42 minutes and 24 seconds of struggling.

Ganson had made such a good showing in the two mat bouts in which he had appeared, following his unheralded arrival in New York City after which he had defeated Calza and Charley Hanson, that the fans had expected a hard tussle when he clashed with Stecher. Few, however, were prepared to see the West Coast contender go for nearly three-quarters of an hour with the Nebraska Giant and they were accordingly surprised and pleased with the entertainment. It was a good exhibition of skill and strength on the part of both men.

Stecher's crown could not be said, at any time in the bout, to have been seriously threatened, but the Scissors King was hard pressed. His Coast adversary was fast and showed a knowledge of the finer points of the game. In particular, he displayed a headlock that would have done justice to Strangler Lewis.



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Chapter XXIX

# Shikat's Rise to Fame

AMERICA boasts of many great athletes, but I doubt that in the long history of sports in this country, a greater champion has ever been produced than Strangler Lewis. When the Strangler was in his prime, he was a marvel, and even after twenty years of ring activity, he continued to show the way to his youthful opponents. In my estimation of greatness in athletic achievement, I place only Jesse Owens, Jim Thorpe and possibly half a dozen other worthies above Lewis, whose record on the mat is without parallel. Even at this writing, after thirty years of continuous wrestling competition, there aren't more than a handful of grapplers who are Lewis' masters.

It was on the night of February 20, 1928, that Lewis regained the world heavyweight title for the third time, by defeating Joe Stecher in St. Louis, Missouri. The match, a thriller from start to finish, lasted close to two and a half hours, at the end of which Lewis was acclaimed the champion for the fourth time. The Strangler won two out of three falls—the first and third.

The challenger won his first fall in 2 hours, 16 minutes and 32 seconds, and was himself thrown 56 seconds later by his Nebraskan rival. Then Lewis got the third fall and won the title in 12 minutes, 50 seconds. It had been expected the bout would be a long-drawn-out affair between the two giants who had been buffeting about the mat winning, losing and claiming the heavyweight title.

But the expected gate of some $80,000 or so, which was to be a record-breaker, did not materialize. Nevertheless, there was a keen interest aroused in the match among the wrestling fans, and the crowd of spectators which gathered about the arena to witness the contest undoubtedly exceeded in numbers that which saw the Frank Gotch-George Hackenschmidt title bout, at Chicago, Ill., in 1908 and which set a record for gate receipts of approximately $37,000.

The men had agreed that in the event either was tossed against the ropes and held there, both would return to the center of the ring and resume wrestling from a standing position.

Lewis was the aggressor in his match with Stecher, and had the Nebraskan "scissors king" down five times for a total of forty-six minutes, before obtaining the first fall with a bar arm, half nelson and scissors hold on the arm.

For the first hour of the struggle there was little of an exciting nature other than the usual grappling back and forth which features



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such events. Lewis was the first to appear. He entered the ring at 9:55 o'clock with Billy Sandow, his manager.

Shortly thereafter, Stecher entered the ring, accompanied by his brother, Tony Stecher, who was his manager. The champion was a big favorite, especially with the local fans.

Their weights were announced as: Stecher, 220 pounds; Lewis, 228.

Both started off cautiously after taking a stand in the center of the ring, their foreheads pressed together, while each wrestler tried to feel his adversary out for a hold. For twelve minutes they stood with their arms about each other's neck until Lewis made a quick try for an armlock. Stecher blocked it.

Another quarter of an hour passed. Lewis tried a headlock. Stecher broke it. Lewis tried again and failed as Stecher dropped for his legs. Lewis thwarted that move and they went back to trying for holds. They worked about in a small area, both perspiring freely as a result of their hard work. Lewis made several other attempts to get a headlock, but Stecher was always ready for him.

Once Lewis appeared to have gotten his favorite hold, the headlock, after twenty-one minutes of struggling, but Stecher broke it by dropping to his knees. After twenty-seven minutes Lewis tripped Stecher and the latter went down on his side. Lewis tried for a toe hold, dragging Stecher to the edge of the mat as the Nebraskan attempted to get his scissors hold.

Realizing they were too close to the edge of the mat, they went back to the center of the ring without waiting for the referee to direct them, and there resumed a face-to-face stance while they continued an even duel for an effective hold.

Lewis tripped Stecher a second time, seventeen minutes after the second hour had begun, or 1 hour, 17 minutes after the start of the match. Stecher had made two unsuccessful attempts to get a hold on Lewis' legs and then had dropped to his knees to break a headlock which Lewis had taken.

When Stecher went down the second time, he dropped on his side as before, then rose to his knees with Lewis trying from the back to get a body hold. That went on for nineteen minutes until Stecher suddenly gave Lewis a push with one knee and jumped to his feet.

Then it was the champion's turn to drop his rival, and he floored Lewis with an arm hold and semi-flying mare. But the crafty Lewis worked around until he was on top and Stecher was on hands and knees. Two hours and eight minutes had elapsed from the start of the contest, when Stecher obtained a head hold. But when he tried to throw Lewis, the latter went down on top of the Nebraskan.

Stecher lay on his side blocking Lewis' efforts to get a toe hold. Then Lewis tried a body hold from the front and finally succeeded in



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pinning Stecher to the mat for the first fall. The wrestlers went to their dressing-rooms for a rest of twenty minutes.

It was 12:48 when they entered the ring for the second fall. That happened quickly and seemingly dazed the challenger momentarily. They had scarcely gone to the center of the squared circle when Stecher got a double wristlock and sent Lewis' shoulders down squarely on the mat in 56 seconds. Lewis' face plainly showed the surprise he felt. It was several seconds before he recovered from the shock.

At 1:10 a. m. they went in for the third fall. Shortly after the start of that period, Stecher was tripped and went down to his hands and knees with Lewis in back trying for a hold. Lewis got a headlock which Stecher immediately broke, at the same time jumping to his feet.

Another headlock by Lewis was also broken. After they had struggled eight minutes, he downed Stecher again with a side body roll, but the champion got away after being on the mat one minute. Another tripping, and Stecher went down again, that time for the third fall. It was then 1.22:50 a. m.

Lewis won the title from Stecher in 1920; lost it to Stanislaus Zbyszko the following year; rewon it; lost it again to Wayne Munn, in January, 1925; regained it from Munn that same May. In the meanwhile, Stecher had won a referee's decision over Lewis at San Francisco, Calif., in 1921 (no falls) and subsequently defeated other contenders. As a result of their various victories both had claimed the title.

Three weeks after his victory over Stecher, Lewis accepted the challenge of Alex Garkawienko, the Russian Giant, and threw him twice in thirty-eight minutes on March 12, in Chicago, Illinois. The bout was staged under peculiar circumstances, for Joe Coffey, the promoter, had to resort to court intervention in order to run off the affair.

Lewis gained the first fall in 29 minutes and 50 seconds by pinning his antagonist with a hammerlock and a wristlock. A reverse body-lock enabled him to score the second and deciding fall in 7 minutes and 57 seconds.

Coffey's difficulty in putting on the contest was brought about through the opposition of Samuel P. Luzzo, member of the Illinois State Athletic Commission, who refused to sanction the championship bout, but the courts ruled in favor of it. The Russian Giant proved a mark for Lewis' headlock. The Strangler got the hold on him eleven times in half an hour.

As in the case of other champions, Lewis travelled around the country and engaged in many exhibitions with an occasional fling at topnotchers. His title, however, was well protected throughout the

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year for he took no chances to score a loss before reaping the fruits of victory over Stecher. Stecher challenged his conqueror several times, but Lewis refused to pay any heed to Joe's demands.

On February 5, 1929, Lewis engaged in a match in New York that almost caused his downfall. He was pitted against Kola Kwariani, the Russian Cossack, and came within a hair's breadth of losing his title. The Russian had the upper hand on his opponent from the very start and tossed Lewis from pillar to post most of the time.

Kwariani had picked up Lewis and raising him high over the head, banged him against the mat repeatedly. In fact, so often did he turn that trick that he had the champion groggy and the fans, who packed the Seventy-first Regiment Armory to capacity, cheered the challenger to the echo as he kept crashing Lewis to the floor.

Three times the Russian raised Lewis and then slammed him with force and as he tried it for the fourth time, he momentarily lost his grip and that spelled his doom. It seemed to all that the championship would change hands with the fourth crash, but with victory within his grasp, Lewis broke free from Kwariani's grip and, sidestepping the Russian, Lewis suddenly wheeled about, gained a crotch hold on the Cossack and, raising him, tossed him over the ropes onto the floor. Kwariani was stunned. The quick move took him by surprise and the effect of the fall added to his discomfiture.

He lay groaning on the floor while Referee Eddie Forbes counted him out. The crowd hissed and booed and some even threatened to enter the ring and pounce on Lewis, but the police intervened and the bout was over. The Russian had Lewis in difficulties frequently and had he not slipped his hold on the champion just when success seemed assured, he would have tossed him. The time of the match was 1 hour, 13 minutes and 15 seconds and was one of the toughest in which he had ever engaged.

That bout was Lewis' last as undisputed titleholder. Thereafter he encountered considerable opposition from Jack Curley, Eastern promoter with whom Lewis had severed relations, and henceforth Curley and his colleagues did all in their power to belittle Lewis and to set up national championship opposition to him. The period around 1930, when Lewis and his manager, Sandow, broke away from the group of wrestlers controlled by Jack Curley, Paul Bowser, Ray Fabiani and others allied with the Eastern wrestling combine, is what might best be termed as the period of championship claims. From that time to the present, the field has been clogged with claimants. With the year 1930, continuity in the succession of heavyweight champions ended.

The story of the break between Lewis and the Eastern contingent is too well known to followers of wrestling to require a review. Suffice it to say that the move resulted in the crowning of Dick



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Shikat as Eastern title holder in opposition to Lewis, and eventually led to the ridiculous situation of having five champions reign in various parts of the country at one time.

In our next chapter, we will go into further details on the "Confusion Period."

Although Strangler Lewis and Jack Curley, America's foremost wrestling promoter, are now the best of friends again, and Jack has often told me that he regarded the Strangler as the greatest of wrestlers barring Hackenschmidt, there was a time when the exponent of the famous headlock and the grappling impresario of New York were the deadliest of enemies. In fact, it was Jack Curley who caused Lewis to lose his title in New York, Pennsylvania and states allied with the boxing commissions of that territory and it all came about through the refusal of Lewis to defend his laurels for Curley.

It was in the latter part of 1929 that Curley and Toots Mondt, New York partners in wrestling promotion, began to boost the stock of one of their men, Dick Shikat, a German giant with a splendid physique and wrestling ability such as few others of recent years could boast. Mondt, who had taken over the management of Shikat, was anxious to have Dick clash with Lewis in a championship bout, but for some unknown reason the Strangler steadfastly refused. Of course, there was considerable talk about Lewis being afraid of the German, and other whispers that the Strangler feared he would be duped out of his crown because of the deep interest the New York promoters had in the challenger, and, as a result, Lewis was haled before the Boxing Board of New York and informed that unless he agreed to meet Shikat, his title would be forfeited. Lewis didn't want to risk his crown in New York and pleaded for more time, but the commission turned down his request.

The pressure brought against Lewis by New York and Pennsylvania commissions had no effect on him, and rather than take a chance on losing his crown in what he termed was hostile territory, he agreed to the formation of a combination between his manager, Billy Sandow, and Paul Bowser, famous Boston promoter, and their agreement called for Lewis to clash with Gus Sonnenberg, then the leading attraction in the Hub. To the surprise of Lewis, he lost his title to Sonnenberg, whose flying tackles proved too much for him.

Thus, while Shikat, Londos, Steinke and other stars who were appearing regularly in New York were clamoring for a chance at the title, a new champion was crowned, but New York's boxing commission and the Penn State board refused to acknowledge Sonnenberg, and thus was born the tournament that ended with Shikat sharing the spotlight with Sonnenberg as world title holder. It was that victory that brought about the wrestling championship mess that

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ended the line of succession to the throne and brought about a new system, with a champion in every port, so to speak.

One thing remained certain—that Lewis had lost his title by being defeated by Sonnenberg, but the manner in which Sonnenberg won and his subsequent refusal to give anyone a chance at the crown who was not a member of the Sandow-Bowser group, ruled against him. It was on August 23, 1929, that Shikat emerged the victor over Londos in a thrilling match in the Municipal Stadium of Philadelphia, and carried off the Eastern wrestling honors. A crowd of 30,000 saw that match and the gathering yelled itself hoarse as the Pride of Quakertown came through triumphantly. In fact, the bout, though billed as a wrestling championship match, was more of a 22-karat fighting match, so terrific and bitter was the struggle. It lasted one hour and fifteen minutes and twelve seconds.

The end came dramatically. It was so thrilling that the spectators rose and cheered wildly. Shikat had become exceedingly rough as the match progressed and just before the finish he decided to make use of boxing tactics to bring his man to terms. First he stung Londos with as neat a right hook as one would care to gaze upon. Then as Londos arose groggily from the ropes, Shikat charged in and, picking him up like a sack of meal, hurled the Greek heavily to the canvas.

Londos was down at this point, but as Shikat had picked him off the ropes referee William Herman would not allow it. It made little difference. Londos was hardly on his feet when the German, now raging like an incensed bull, rushed and repeated the dose. This time Londos went down with a thud that must have rocked the feet of William Penn, perched several miles away on the top of the City Hall.

Shikat leaped on top of him and applied the pressure, but it was hardly necessary. Londos was dead to the world, and it took the combined efforts of several handlers as well as a liberal dose of smelling salts to revive him. Even when he regained his feet he was unsteady and had to be assisted from the ring.

But there was no funeral hush as they worked fervently over Londos. Instead, he was almost ignored except by his handlers and a few officials. The spectators had no time for him, for they were busy hailing the new champion in the wildest terms.

A scene unparalleled in Philadelphia followed as the police were forced to form a circle around the ring and hold back the hundreds who tried to leap on the canvas and shake Shikat by the hand.

When quiet was restored, Frank Wiener, chairman of the Penn commission, stepped up and fastened the Lavis belt on the German's waist, and the demonstration broke out anew.

For ten minutes they cheered Shikat and when he finally climbed



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through the ropes, he was almost swept off his feet as the enthusiastic crowd surged about him.

Philadelphia was certainly steamed up over this match. The crowd came out despite the threatening weather and when the rain did come down halfway through the bout, the customers sat unmoved as they did when Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney fought on the same spot in a similar downpour.

It was a great victory for Shikat, as it was the first time Londos had felt his shoulders on the mat since Joe Stecher performed the trick five years previously. But outside of actually winning, the German also scored throughout the match, although he had to be careful and was forced to resort to tactics that would not have been countenanced in a New York ring.

Londos was at a distinct disadvantage all the way through. He conceded five inches in height, as well as twenty pounds to Shikat, and besides the crowd was very much against him. Shikat could do as he pleased, and the crowd roared its approval, but if the Greek so much as raised a finger, boos resounded throughout the stadium.

With it all, Shikat gave a superlative performance. Cleverly coached from the corner by Toots Mondt, he displayed a keen insight on the finer points of wrestling. On few occasions was he in trouble himself, while he had Londos on the verge of defeat several times.

The bout started slowly, for both were extremely cautious as they squared off. For five minutes they didn't lay a hand on each other. Shikat finally secured a wristlock, but he could not topple Londos from his feet, and no more success was scored with a headlock a few moments later. Between these holds, Shikat kept walloping Londos on the back of his neck with his forearm, which made the Greek complain bitterly to the referee.

Londos slapped with his open hand, and after a few more cuffings from both, Londos tumbled for the first trip to the canvas, a headlock sending him down after fifteen minutes of assorted mauling.

They went into the ropes, and were forced to the center again, where Londos sent Shikat down with a hammerlock, but the German wriggled out of this, and jumped to his feet, to engage in another lively sparring match with the Greek.

Then the rain came, and with it Shikat increased his activity, pinning Londos with a body scissors, that hurt tremendously. With Londos weak, Shikat pressed his advantage, and between some neat socking and torturous body holds, the Greek seemed ready for the cleaners.

A head scissors and wristlock increased Londos' discomfort, and it was only with extreme dexterity that he was able to ward off defeat at this point. After taking the worst of it for almost an hour,

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the Greek suddenly turned the tide and had Shikat puffing from a vicious body scissors. With Shikat in a daze, Londos turned on some fisticuffs for a change, and then dashed in to toss the German all around the ring. Twice Shikat went to the canvas, and then he took four more downward swoops after a short rest.

Londos, seeing victory looming up, leaped in for a headlock, and as he did Shikat clipped him on the chin. The Greek went sailing into the ropes, with Shikat on top of him, and then followed the tumultuous finish that sent the crowd into a frenzy.

The gathering, almost in a mass, came down to the ringside, and cheers greeted the victor who was extremely popular with the German folk of Pennsylvania and also with those dyed-in-the-wool fans who were thrilled by his expertness.

Although the tenure of Dick Shikat as world's heavyweight wrestling champion was extremely short, he was a most active titleholder. He engaged in many matches, most of which were staged in New York and Philadelphia. To give in detail all of the bouts in which Shikat successfully defended his crown would take up more space than we can allow. We will review only his most important engagements.

Among those who faced the big German and tasted defeat were Garibaldi, Romano, Stocca, Hagen, Calza (three times), Holuban, Kirilenko, Clinkstock and Hans Steinke—an impressive list. Of the list, the best bouts were those with Calza and Holuban.

It was on November 5, 1929, that Shikat faced his first tough challenger in Garibaldi, before a gathering of eight thousand fans at the Seventy-first Regiment Armory in New York. Dick carried off the honors in 26.36.

The result was not a popular one for the crowd seemed made up mostly of Garibaldi's countrymen and they were very enthusiastic in his behalf, even in defeat. Each of the wrestlers weighed 217 pounds and both were in fine shape, as was evidenced by the aggressive and speedy manner in which they attacked during the first ten minutes without either seeking to gain a respite.

Tugging and hauling through the next ten minutes, Garibaldi forced the issue and made Shikat resort to all of his defensive skill to keep out of trouble.

After twenty minutes of battling, however, the pace began to tell on Garibaldi, and though he continued to attack with ferocity, he weakened, and a full nelson clamped on with much strength by Shikat, followed quickly by a crotch and body hold, brought the Italian star's shoulders to the mat and ended the bout.

That match was the start of a series in New York that continued over a stretch of several months, Shikat appearing under Curley's supervision, each Monday evening. During that stretch, Dick took on



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opponents who naturally were friendly to the Curley-Fabiani combine as opposed to the Bowser troupe from Boston that was exhibiting Sonnenberg as champion. Each group was playing to capacity houses.

The late Mike Romano, an old-time trouper, was next to face the champion, and he also was tossed, the time being 20.51. Shikat turned the trick by the simple method of picking Mike up and throwing him with force, then heaving himself on top of his prostrate opponent.

It was a hard-fought struggle while it lasted, with both men displaying every brand of wrestling except the flying tackle, which had not yet become part of our modern wrestling. In a hot scrimmage, Romano fell out of the ring and hurt his back, but he crawled back and from that time to the end he was a mark for the titleholder.

The procedure that Shikat had followed in subduing Romano he repeated a few days later in conquering Joe Stocca in eighteen minutes and twenty seconds. A crotch and body lift, followed by a body slam, ended it. Prior to the fall, Stocca had been heaving Shikat all over the mat to the pleasure of six thousand fans who howled with glee as the Italian manhandled the German. Then Shikat became angered at the taunts of the gathering and rushed forth to put the finishing touches on his rival.

George Hagen, former champion of the United States Marines, was the third victim in a stretch of a fortnight. He took Shikat on at the Ridgewood Club of Brooklyn and proved a good match for the titleholder. In fact, the huge gathering that packed the arena to the limit, and Shikat, were much surprised by the caliber of grappling put forth by Hagen. George appeared at his best and he made Shikat travel at top speed to score the triumph. It took the champion one hour and fifteen seconds to win. A series of flying mares, body slams and headlocks weakened George, and then came the body lift and crotch hold, with a body slam to settle the affair.

One of Shikat's toughest matches after winning the title was that with George Calza, then the recognized Italian champion. They fought bitterly for fifty-eight minutes and fifty-four seconds before George was subdued. The dynamic, burly Italian, who scaled 230 pounds, drew more than nine thousand fans to the Seventy-first Regiment Armory on November 25, 1929, to see the struggle, a benefit performance for the Italian Kiddies' Fund, and they were well satisfied that they had been treated to one of the finest exhibitions of all-around wrestling seen in New York that year.

It was a desperate test, in which Shikat was forced on the defensive most of the time. Unfortunately for Calza, he did what most ambitious young fellows attempt in a match against a veteran—he virtually whirled himself into a dizzy spell by a series of seven

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spectacular flying mares on Shikat. There is no man in the mat sport who can take a fall more gracefully, without chance of bodily injury, than Shikat, hence he permitted Calza to work himself into a frenzy, and then quickly shifted to the attack and, in attempting to obtain a headlock on George, Calza's head struck the post with a thud and it became an easy task for Shikat to get the fall.

That contest proved without question that, regardless of the championship controversies, the best wrestler in America at the time was Dick Shikat.

That year found Shikat in twenty-seven bouts in which he successfully defended his crown, the last and most important being that with Ferenc Holuban in the Seventy-first Regiment Armory. Unlike the other contests, however, that bout was short and sweet, yet combined more thrills than any of his previous engagements. Holuban, the recognized Graeco-Roman champion of Europe, went out in nineteen minutes. After being hurled out of the ring, Holuban failed to return within the prescribed time limit and was disqualified by Referee Ernest Roeber.

The Armory was a bedlam, and for fifteen minutes whistling and shouting of such ominous character as only wrestling fans can produce reverberated through the big drill shed while a corps of police and firemen stationed themselves in strategic positions.

The scene at the ringside beggars description. Fists were shaken at the referee and all those in authority. Vasarhely Lajos, Hungarian writer, was frantic in efforts to have the decision reversed, and another Hungarian climbed to the ring and was almost through the ropes on his way to attack Referee Roeber when Vasarhely tackled him from below and pulled him back.

The capacity crowd of ten thousand, including many of the fair sex, jammed every vantage point, stood forty deep behind the ringside seats, three deep on surrounding radiators, and made the air stifling, the atmosphere dangerous. This was the wrestling bout of the year. It was estimated that four thousand were turned away at the doors. Only ticket holders were permitted to pass through a gantlet of police, who met you emerging from the subway.

The end of the bout came as both wrestlers crashed through the ropes upon impetus supplied by Shikat, and fell to the floor four feet below. Shikat had just rushed headlong at the Magyar giant in an attempt to thrust his right hand under Holuban's legs and apply his favorite crotch-and-body hold by which he hoped to raise Holuban in the air and slam him down.

This intended feat of Shikat's was within the limits of the German-American's power and skill, though he weighed twenty pounds less than Holuban. Shikat won the title he then held by picking up the 245-pound Hans Steinke and slamming him down.



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As Shikat charged low and reached, Holuban stepped backward; Shikat, missing his clutch with his hand, but butting Holuban in the stomach (the largest stomach you ever did see), and the impact was so great that Holuban was bowled over backward, and the speed of the charger was such that he was right on top of Holuban, rolling over the edge of the ring, holding on to him. Neither fell directly on top of the other, but as Holuban went down his head and side struck the edges of two quickly vacated press chairs, and it was this that knocked him senseless. Shikat disentangled himself immediately and was back in the ring as the referee counted four.

Holuban did not lie perfectly still. His face writhed in pain, and he clutched at the air as he lay on his back. His manager and others tried to lift him up but they did not succeed until the referee tolled the count of ten.

Holuban was back in his corner, standing complacently as though nothing had happened to him, almost as soon as the referee had raised Shikat's arm in the air. But Holuban did not see this; nor, when he arrived back in the ring, would he have seen Shikat had he taken the trouble to look. For Shikat had dashed to the dressing room under police escort.

In the moments preceding the final charge, Shikat had been the victim of four successive flying mares applied by this rugged Hercules, who has no neck to speak of, whose small head makes it impossible for an opponent to apply headlocks, and whose arms and legs have the strength of ten. Not once during the nineteen minutes and thirty-two seconds of the bout did Shikat get a firm hold on the challenger, who strode around like a Theatre Guild robot menacing the champion and thwarting his every move but the last.

The year 1930, during part of which Shikat held the crown, was also a most active one for the champion. Garibaldi, Steinke, Calza, Clinstock and Kirilenko were among his more important victims.

In his match with Garibaldi, the Italian was pinned in 37.52, after receiving a sprained neck as a result of a fall out of the ring. A throng of ten thousand saw Shikat pin his adversary in New York, although the champion found a tough opponent in Gino.

Only a few minutes before losing the bout, Garibaldi raised Shikat and thrice hurled the titleholder over his shoulders with flying mares. As Shikat recovered, Gino rushed at him to apply the finishing touches. Dick sidestepped, and out of the ring went Garibaldi.

Upon re-entering, he was so dazed he groped around the ring and then, as he tried to straighten up, he found that he had hurt his back badly. It was easy thereafter for Shikat to gain the fall and match.

When Shikat next tackled Calza, the champion again demonstrated his superiority. His cleverness as a tactician and his variety of holds proved too much for the Italian, who was thrown in forty-eight

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minutes and ten seconds. As has been the custom for ever so long, just before the fall, the challenger became extremely aggressive.

Seven times Calza applied his muscular arm to Shikat's head and sent the champion hurtling over backwards in the thing called the flying mare.

After the seventh flying mare, Shikat slowly raised himself, seized the rather deliberate Calza around the body and dropped him down so that his neck struck the mat first. Calza was now somewhat off the stream of consciousness, and when he struggled to his feet Shikat repeated the operation with emphasis, slamming his man down and following up the movement by dropping on Calza and flattening his shoulders flat with the mat.

As a contest it was not taken too seriously; as a piece of athletic entertainment, or as a study in classic attitudes, it was excellent.

Next in importance came Shikat's bout with Kirilenko, which drew a tremendous throng to the Seventy-first Regiment Armory. The match was one of the best during Dick's reign, even though the Russian substituted for Holuban, who was in Easton, Pa., in a hospital as a result of an injury.

Kirilenko made a strong effort to wrest the title from Shikat, and competed with the champion on fairly even terms until he was thrown with a crotch hold in forty minutes and five seconds. The sentiment of the crowd was decidedly against the champion, who was jeered roundly all during his performance.

Shikat was unperturbed by the demonstration, however, and waged a cool struggle against his aggressive rival. After more than half an hour of strenuous grappling, Kirilenko took the titleholder by surprise and whirled him to the floor three times with flying mares.

Shikat was dazed, but managed to apply a full nelson to his rival and dropped the Russian heavily to the floor, where he lay partly stunned. Then it was a comparatively easy task for Shikat to secure a crotch hold and pin his rival's shoulders to the mat. Each weighed 218 pounds.

An Indian giant carrying a Turkish stomach, named Jim Clinkstock, was Shikat's next victim. This Sioux Indian, cool as a cucumber, met his end in spectacular manner, common to all those who came to grips with Shikat while he held the crown.

Pushed, whirled and slammed about the ring until he had no leg to stand on, nor any sense of direction, the exotic-looking Indian was finally picked up in Shikat's arms and given a final bounce off his spinal column. The merciless finish was accomplished in fifty-one minutes and five seconds, almost every minute of which contained wrestling good enough to keep six thousand spectators in a state of high attention, though not suspense.

Clinkstock had an abundance of strength and plenty of ability to



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endure torture, but in the cunning of wrestling he lacked what the champion possessed. At times he gained the plaudits of the crowd by obtaining scissors holds on the champion that had Shikat considerably worried. In the long run, however, Shikat's skill told. He continued as champion.

A few weeks later, these wrestlers clashed again and this time Shikat won in another grueling contest in 51.05.

The massive Clinkstock, who weighed 238 pounds, bothered the champion considerably in the early stages of the contest, much to the delight of the spectators, who booed Shikat from start to finish. The Indian clamped a series of head and body scissors holds on the title-holder, and on many occasions seemed to have him ready for a fall.

Shikat finally broke loose from a grueling scissors hold and tossed Clinkstock around the rink with a succession of flying mares. He weakened the challenger by this method and had little difficulty in picking him up with a body and crotch hold to slam him to the canvas and win the match. Shikat weighed 218 pounds.

The outstanding match of Shikat's championship career was that with Hans Steinke, an equally husky, well proportioned, splendid German wrestler. They clashed on May 6, 1930, and after forty-five minutes and five seconds of thrilling grappling, Shikat emerged the victor. The biggest crowd that had ever packed the Seventy-first Regiment Armory was out to see these two German dreadnaughts settle the matter of supremacy, and they were treated to the bitterest wrestling that had been seen in New York since the World War.

Shikat's tactics were those of the hunted animals. He was plainly defending his title, and he resorted to every device to keep Steinke from applying his great strength. The champion cowered in corners, scrambled for the ropes, held his hands up in distress—but all the while his brains were functioning in a clear, calm course, ever alive to signal the opportunity when at last it came.

Catlike, Shikat was bent over with his back to a corner of the ropes, with Steinke trying to work on him from above. Just the moment before, Steinke had held Shikat up in the air with a crotch and body hold and had slammed him down, but the champion, being a master in the art of taking hard falls painlessly, had only rolled out of the fall, so to speak, into the bent-over position in the corner.

Now Steinke, all too eager, all too zealous in his desire to follow up his advantage with a hold and slam-down of more enduring results, allows his legs to come too close to the champion, who was bent over, but who, nevertheless, had the use of both arms.

With a flash Shikat saw his chance and, thrusting both hands out, caught Steinke's legs and pulled them straight out from underneath him, so that Steinke fell backward with a rush, striking his head a solid blow on the mat. This was the tell-tale blow, but had the

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champion hesitated even a moment in his follow-up, Steinke might have recovered himself in time to assume a defensive posture. And, incidentally, this would have been his first of the evening.

But Shikat was as deft in his follow-up as he was in executing his surprise tripping-up of Steinke. Instantly Shikat descended on his victim, who lay on his back with elbows sustaining him mechanically, and clasped a leg scissors around Steinke's neck. Steinke's props went down. Shikat squeezed with all his might. Steinke's shoulders sank lower and lower as strength seemed visibly to depart from him. After a hurried but careful inspection by Referee Ernest Roeber, Steinke's shoulders were declared in contact, and Shikat declared the champion still.

It was a most unfortunate ending for the man who had forced the fight from the beginning. The stronger man, the taller, the cleaner wrestler, the more popular, was the loser. Shikat had never before been so desperately in need of his clear head. He played the fox, while his challenger player the angry lion. It was to irritate Steinke, to upset his poise and make him furious that Shikat rubbed his knuckles across Steinke's face and his shoes across Steinke's eyes so that one of the eyes began to swell.

Steine's famous bear-hug hold, by which he picked up his man face to face and squeezed him, was a constant thorn in Shikat's peace of mind. Once, early in the bout, Shikat found himself clamped in this frightful vise and that experience was sufficient to keep him out of this particular danger thereafter.

The fans made frequent shouting requests for Hans' bear-hug and Hans would have obliged them had he been able to grasp Shikat in just that way. But the champion defended himself with the most skilful manipulation of his body, and with tactics that were not nearly so skilful as they were expedient. We refer to the champion's frequent excursions to the ropes. When trouble approached he knew where sure shelter was to be found. The ropes to him were what the count of nine is to a knocked down boxer.

Shikat, of course, knew his limitations. He knew he weighed 218 to Steinke's 240; he knew he was not nearly so broad nor so tall as his challenger, and he knew how fervently Steinke, his natural rival, desired to win. For it was Steinke whom Shikat beat the previous summer to gain the title of world heavyweight champion, as recognized by the State Athletic Commissions of Pennsylvania, New York and the several other States in accord.

After the bout, Shikat, who had all but spent himself in the struggle, sat on the stool brought to the ring by his manager. Steinke lay on the mat for several minutes as his men worked over him. He sat up presently and crossed the ring to shake hands with the champion.

That bout ended Shikat's tenure as champion. In his next engagement, with Jim Londos, a new champion was crowned.



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Chapter XXX

# Complications Arise

FOLLOWING Shikat's victory over Steinke, the stage was all set for the championship match between the champion and Jim Londos, the challenger. Because of the popularity of Shikat in Philadelphia, it was decided to stage the bout there, and with Ray Fabiani as the promoter, it took place at the Phillies' Ball Park on June 8, 1930. That contest was staged very much under the same conditions as was the famous bout between Dempsey and Tunney a few years previously at the Sesquicentennial Stadium, for intermittent showers drenched the eighteen thousand fans and also was the cause for keeping thousands of others from the park. A Japanese headlock ended the proceedings after 1.56 of keen wrestling.

In fact, it was one of the best bouts seen in this country since the famed Lewis-Zbyszko mill. It was a real shooting match, with plenty of fine wrestling seen throughout. It was exceedingly rough at times, to be sure, but that only added to the excitement. Shikat, it will be recalled, was one of the roughest grapplers in the game when he wanted to be such, and he made Londos wince more than once under severe rough punishment.

Of course, the bout was recognized only in Pennsylvania and New York as for the championship, but that was sufficient because, with those states in back of the winner, he was assured of the best support in the land. While Londos and Shikat were having it out in the Quaker City, the rival group, of which Sonnenberg was the head, kept marking time, and eventually arranged a match between Sonnenberg and Lewis for its part of the "world championship" and of this and the Sonnenberg claim, we shall say more later in reviewing his career.

As for the affair in which Londos ascended the throne—for he was generally recognized as world titleholder because he undoubtedly at the time was the best matman in the field—it was replete with sensational wrestling. Herman Wolff, himself once the lightweight king, was the third man in the ring. For ten minutes, the affair was a tense one, with now and then a quick, catlike shift and almost as fast a break, featuring. Neither man during that time was able to toss the other to the mat, although once Shikat almost turned the trick with a crotch hold from which Jemmy broke loose, and Londos had a Japanese armlock on Shikat, from which Dick got away.

They wrestled for the next seven minutes in masterly style, with the crowd applauding their every move. Shikat, realizing what the retention of his crown meant to him financially, went on the defense



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as the fifteen minutes' mark was reached and refused to do any rash leading. But there were countless lightning thrusts and parries, efforts to feint the other man out of position and to gain an opening.

Suddenly Shikat found that opening. He snapped back Londos' arm in a hammerlock and, quick as a flash, had Jemmy down on the mat. There Dick tugged away in an effort to force Londos to cry quits, but the Greek Adonis stood the pain without a whimper until he released himself.

Several minutes more of upright work and then both again went to the mat, and this time Londos had more difficulty escaping. But escape he did, and once more they were performing in an upright position, punctuated by a few left hooks, right crosses, hand slapping and plenty of countering and feinting.

The rain began to come down heavily for a few minutes and drenched gladiators and spectators, but didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the crowd. The men were perspiring heavily and that, with the rain, made things uncomfortable. Three times Shikat tossed Londos to the mat with crotch and hammerlock but, on each occasion, the slippery Greek quickly broke the grip and escaped.

And so it went along for an hour and fifteen minutes. Keen wrestling, considerable tugging, plenty of hand slapping and roughness that ordinarily would have put weaker fellows out much sooner. Throughout the greater portion of that period it continued to drizzle and at times the rain came down in a torrent, but that didn't interfere with the calibre of the wrestling.

Shikat was eager to end proceedings and he went after Londos with a vim as time marched on. He got a crotch and half nelson and crashed Londos to the canvas. But the Greek was a tough customer that night, and he escaped in less than a minute.

As Shikat attempted to repeat the hold after both had come to an upright position, Dick suddenly found himself embraced in a Japanese headlock and was sent across the mat. Then it was Dick who showed the stuff, for he came back with another crotch and half nelson and crashed his man to the mat.

Rather weakly, the Greek Adonis gained his feet, but he fell into a trap. Shikat rushed into him and with a headlock sent Jemmy spinning across the canvas to land on his back. As he crashed to the canvas, now so slippery from the rain that it was with difficulty either man could get a firm grip for his stance, Londos rolled over to his stomach to keep his shoulders from being pinned, and as Shikat maneuvered, Londos broke free and almost dislocated Shikat's knee before he could escape from a punishing Japanese leg hold.

Now the tables again were turned. Shikat backed up to the ropes and stood with left leg well back to protect it. Londos rushed in and,



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as he did so, Dick let fly the other leg and sent Jemmy flying across the ring.

Londos quickly recovered, came back again with fire in his eyes, and lashed out to finish his rival. The Greek grabbed the weakened German's left shoulder and leg, roughed him a bit to take all the remaining starch out of the champion, and then dumped him solidly to the mat.

Game to the core, Shikat staggered to his feet, only to fall into a Japanese headlock and to be sent over his back. As he fell, Londos shifted to an armlock, and the champion became helpless.

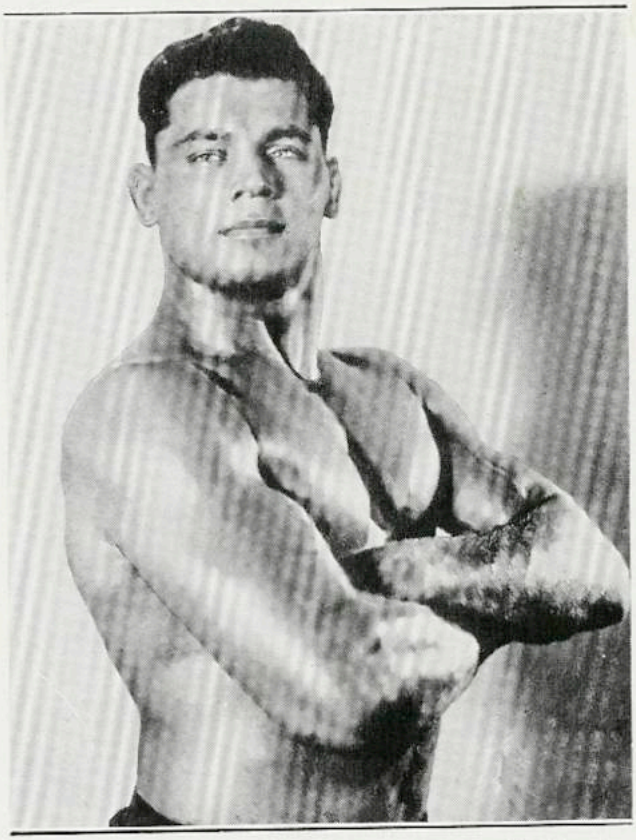
So went the greatest match I had seen in several years. It was a masterly contest despite all its roughness, one that has not been duplicated for skill and general excitement up to this writing. Three seconds after Shikat was thrown on his back, Referee Wolf tapped the back of Londos, thus proclaiming a new king. Amid great cheering, Londos was hailed by a frenzied army of his enthusiasts. Thus, one king was supplanted by the Greek, while the rival band, headed by Sonnenberg, continued to display its champion in parts of the country where the Shikat-Londos combination was taboo.

Before going into the champion career of Londos, the time is now ripe to take up the case of Sonnenberg and Lewis in order to dovetail our story and follow the sequence. It will be recalled that in a previous chapter I called attention to the fact that up to the break between Ed Strangler Lewis and Jack Curley, things were going along pretty well in so far as succession to the wrestling throne was concerned, but it was that break that brought about the disruption which, to this day, has not been cleared. When Lewis severed relations with the so-called wrestling trust, headed by Jack Curley, he received the backing of the Illinois Boxing Commission, which proclaimed him the legitimate champion and presented him with a belt to further strengthen his claim.

The big moment in the life of Gus Sonnenberg came on the night of January 4, 1929, when the squatty little Dartmouth gridder found himself facing Ed Lewis on the mat. Gus was spotting the champion about forty pounds in weight and about twenty years in experience, yet he came through with flying colors. He wormed his way out of numerous headlocks. He tried an occasional toe hold, but he was a novice with that grip. Lewis was too strong for Gus when a half nelson was used, yet Sonnenberg, throughout the struggle, showed the true courage of a college gridder.

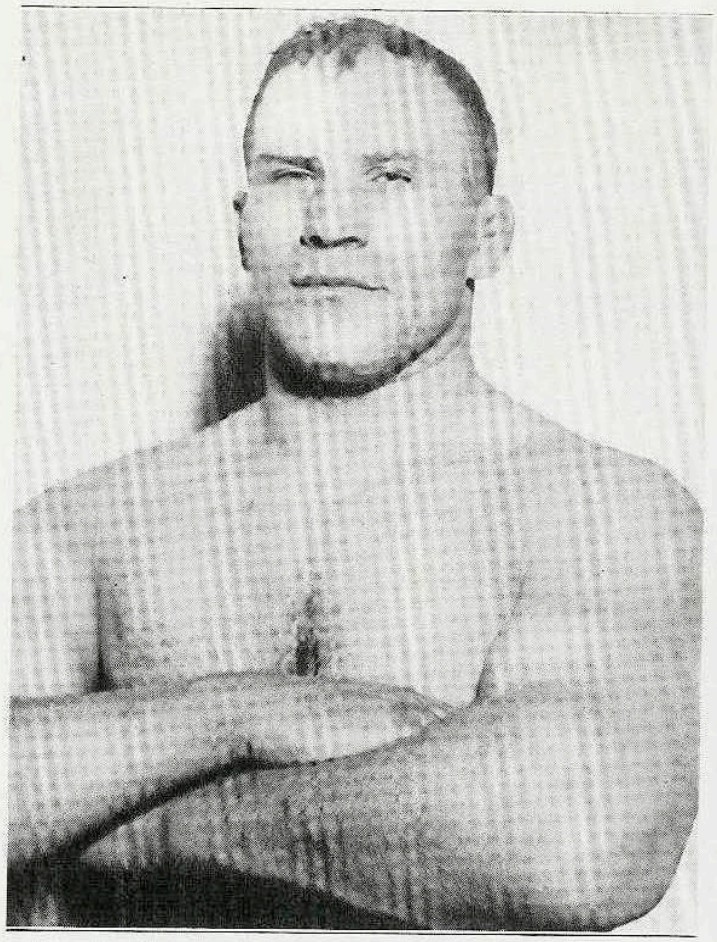
Many times during the match Gus tried to use Lewis' favorite hold, the headlock, but the referee broke him from the grip because, instead of a headlock, the inexperienced Gus used a strangle hold. But Gus awaited the opening which finally came. He rushed out of his corner, gave Lewis the flying tackle, then a mighty head-on butt,

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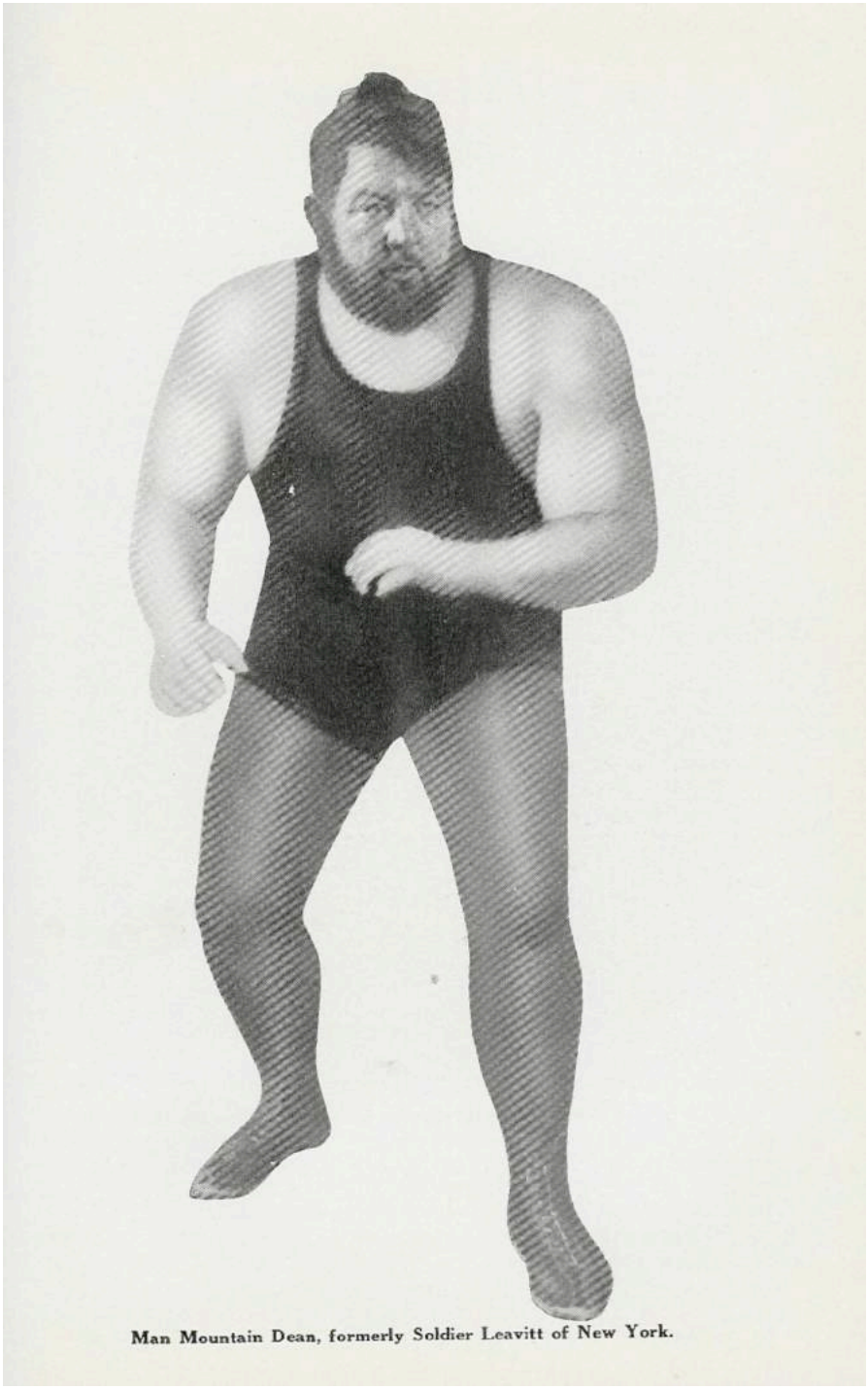
Sandor Szabo, a Hungarian wrestler who ranked with the cleverest of recent years.


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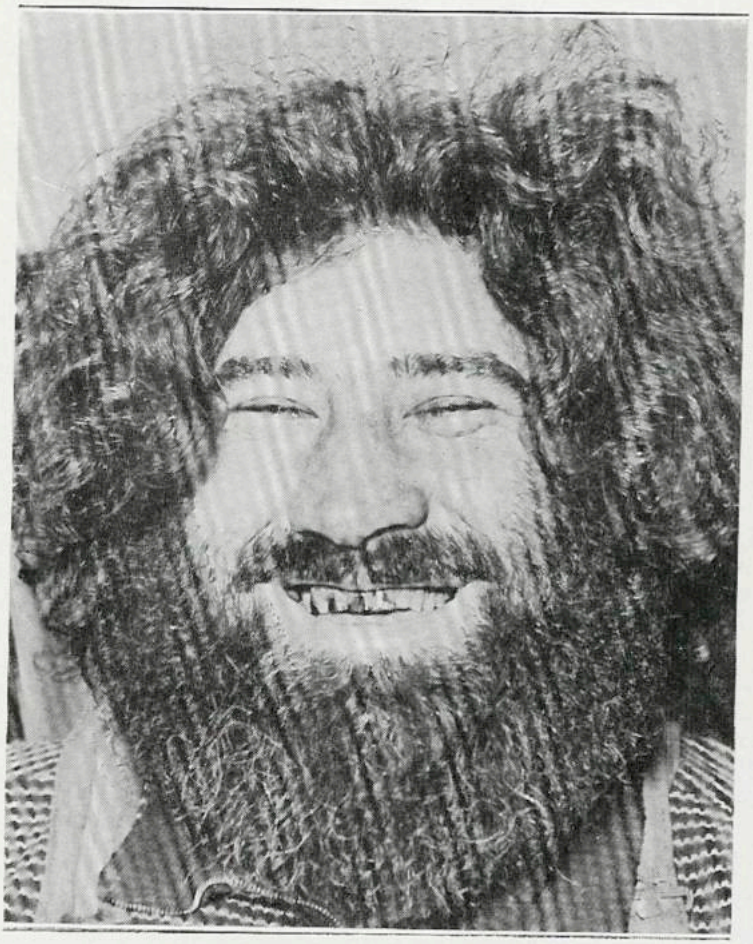
Hans Steinke, one of the strongest wrestlers of modern times.

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Man Mountain Dean, formerly Soldier Leavitt of New York.


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Leo Savage of Texas, a bearded wrestler with a good record in the South.

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and Lewis was knocked out on the mat. Gus leaped on him, squatted on his big chest, and the taps of the referee announced to Sonnenberg that he had won the first fall. In the second, he roughed it up from start to finish and knocked Ed out of the ring until they counted him out.

He was the world champion, so far as the National Boxing Association and the states it represented was concerned, and thus, within one year after Gus had become a professional wrestler, he had gained the highest honors possible. Of course, the Curley-Mondt-Fabiani group ridiculed the claim, but the fact remained that Sonnenberg had as much claim to the honors as did Londos—in fact more, for Lewis was the world champion at the time that he was dethroned by the New York board, a most unpopular move that created the chaos in wrestling that has never been cleared—a chaos that eventually confused the situation by causing five champions to parade the country instead of the one who should have held sway. But since we are working under commission rules, their decision must be honored and that's why we are taking up the case of all the claimants in this historic sketch.

Old-time wrestling observers were stunned with Sonnenberg's victory over Lewis. The young grappler from the college ranks became the talk of the mat sport. He went out for a tour of one-night stands as the latest hero in the sports world. Everyone wanted to see this freak of the wrestling world and he became a huge attraction. He was the originator of the flying tackle and soon that became most popular with every college athlete who had taken up pro wrestling.

That is the story of Sonnenberg's rise to fame and the introduction into the sport of two "world" champions. Lewis was far from satisfied that he had lost to a better wrestler and as the Sonnenberg affair was the first championship match in which the dreaded flying tackle was used, the Strangler demanded another match and he got it. In their first set-up they clashed at the Boston Garden, and in the second at Fenway Park, Boston, and there again Sonnenberg won.

That bout took place on July 10, 1929. About twenty-five thousand saw that rubber struggle, for each previously had won a match, and Sonnenberg's victory was acclaimed by the National Boxing Association, which crowned him world king in opposition to Shikat.

Gus didn't rule long as king, and as a result of his quick defeat the wrestling situation became more complicated. It was a few months after Shikat lost his Eastern crown to Londos that Sonnenberg was matched with Ed Don George, the former Michigan University football star, whom he had defeated in a previous meeting, and as a result of that clash George became the successor to the throne over which the Bowser group from Boston held sway.

In their first engagement, George was rendered unconscious by



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Sonnenberg, who, likewise, was on the verge of collapse, and the thirty thousand Bostonians who saw that match clamored for another. Gus was willing and so was Don, and on December 10, 1930, they met in the Boston Garden in what proved one of the roughest battles staged in the Hub. It was one of those rare affairs in which the boys did everything but crucify themselves.

Gus took the first fall quite readily but lost the second after Don gave him a nasty crashing to the mat with a trick hold. Then Ed came back to march his way to fame and glory through the medium of a Japanese armlock after 12 minutes and 52 seconds of hard going. Thus a new king, so far as the National Boxing Association and the Bowser trust was concerned, was crowned.

The new "king" didn't waste any time, for he decided he would make hay while the sun shined and, contrary to the advice of his mentors, he accepted a challenge from Ed Strangler Lewis for a match in Los Angeles, where Lewis was a big drawing card. Lewis, thoroughly dissatisfied at the outcome of his bouts with Sonnenberg, had gone back to the Coast, where he placed himself under the training of head coach Jones of the Southern California football team. He conditioned himself by playing football with the scrubs, and when he thought he had conditioned himself properly, he challenged George and didn't have to wait long for Don's acceptance.

By the time this match was staged, Londos had already downed Shikat to win the Eastern title. Londos had become a strong favorite and had killed the interest in Lewis' comeback, but that didn't halt the George-Lewis affair. Lewis was full of fight, and after 1.10.56 he gained the first fall in their struggle at Wrigley Field and the second in much faster time, thus dethroning George and regaining the N. B. A. crown.

It was the fourth time in a decade that Lewis had come to the top, and, if we are to go by line of succession, there can be no doubt that he was far more entitled to the international honors than was Londos because, while Londos was acclaimed by a boxing commission, Lewis had legitimately won his crown from men who won their title from legitimate holders.

George's reign lasted only four months. Lewis, the veteran of more than twenty years of service, crushed his younger opponent with a series of headlocks in the first session and then made short work of the former national amateur champion to pin his shoulders to the mat for the second and deciding fall. That bout took place on April 14, 1931.

Strangely, the twelve thousand customers who shivered through the long first period at Wrigley Field, roared approval of the grappler who had been greeted with boos as he entered the ring.

Six headlocks in a row terminated the first session after 1 hour, 10

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minutes, 6 seconds of spectacular showmanship, George appeared to be out cold and was an easy victim for the second flop, brought about by a hammerlock in 7 minutes, 42 seconds.

So now we again had the "Old Man" of wrestling at the helm in one branch of America's wrestling trust and Londos, the wearer of the purple robe, in the other, headed by Curley, Mondt and Fabiani. George clamored for a return bout, but Lewis, who realized what youth meant in such a strenuous sport as wrestling, decided against such a course, and to strengthen his claim to national honors, when he found Londos' popularity on the rise, he and his mentor, Sandow, hit the trail eastward.

While Lewis headed towards the Atlantic to invade Londos' territory and stronghold, Londos went west, and in St. Louis, Kansas City and even in Chicago, Lewis's best territory outside of California, Londos packed them in. Lewis decided to take a chance on adding the prolific Canadian wrestling stronghold to his list by appearing there against Canada's best and most popular figure, Henri De Glane, and much to his regret, for it was in Canada that he dropped the title only a few weeks after winning it from George. And here is how it all happened:

Lewis had all the better of the milling when, as the 32 minutes' mark was reached, the Strangler got three headlocks on De Glane that left Henri groggy. Then, like a flash, Henri got out of his stupor, rushed Lewis against the ropes, and tossed him with a bang with a flying mare.

Referee Tremblay called the fall and Lewis and Sandow argued vainly against it. So persistent had the argument become that police were called into the ring to remove Lewis' manager on the grounds that he had no license, and it was only after considerable persuasion that Lewis consented to go on with the match for the second fall.

They wrestled for nine minutes, when Lewis scored a fall. Then there was a confused tangle and De Glane was found underneath Lewis, sadly crushed, but his shoulders pinned securely. Referee Tremblay didn't hesitate to give Lewis that fall, thus evening the match. Then came the climax:

De Glane rose to his feet, holding his right arm. He insisted that while he was down, Lewis had bitten him several times. The referee examined the wrist and then the doctor did likewise, and that was followed by a consultation of boxing commissioners, who, quick to take advantage of the situation, declared that Lewis was guilty of foul tactics and disqualified the Strangler. That action enabled the commission to rule De Glane its champion, the world titleholder, and added fuel to the wrestling fire by complicating the championship situation still more.

Needless to say, Lewis and Sandow refused to accept the verdict,

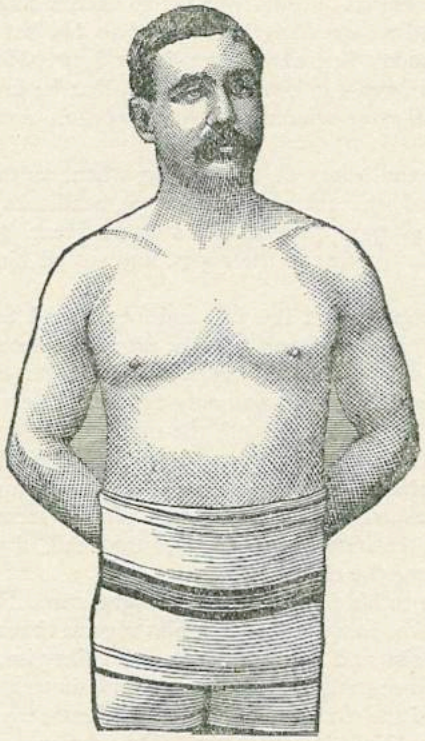


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and as Lewis had the backing of the National Boxing Commission, there were now three "world champions" in Londos, representing the East; De Glane, "world champion" in Canada only, and Lewis, the N. B. A. titleholder.

Don George soon came back into the championship picture when he took on De Glane in what was advertised as a world match, and when De Glane broke his collar bone, George again became the standard bearer. His mentor, Paul Bowser, took full advantage of the new turn of affairs by proclaiming to the world that George was the world, Canadian and New England crown wearer, and thus we had the kaleidoscopic changes in the wrestling horizon.

Now to go back to Lewis and Londos to complete our chain.



Joe Acton, English champion wrestler during the eighties.

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Chapter XXXI

# The Londos-Curley Break

WE have reached the stage in our history of American wrestling that is so complicated that it requires the wisdom of a Solomon to keep the records straight. As I remarked in a previous chapter, starting with the year 1929, there began to branch out several combines around the country, each laying claim to a champion, with the result that at one time we had Lewis, Shikat, Sonnenberg, De Glane and George listed as world title holders, but by degrees, the promoters, matchmakers, wrestlers and even the managers came to their senses and began to see the wisdom of eliminating a few of the group in order to add interest to the mat sport and to halt the newspaper ridicule that had been hurled at the pachyderms because of the complicated situation.

When Lewis defeated George on the Coast, there could be no further doubt about the supremacy of the Strangler over all the men who were claiming the title around the country. The triumph of Don over De Glane, clinched only the Canadian and New England title again for George, but as Sonnenberg had lost his crown to George and Don, in turn, was whipped fairly by Lewis, Ed had a better claim on the national honors than did Londos, who beat only a New York and Pennsylvania titleholder and had already been defeated fourteen times by Lewis.

But you couldn't prove that to the partisans of Londos and Don George. They had their own ideas about the national champion and to them, Don and the Greek were the big shots. But little did they figure that the situation would be still further complicated by the arrival of a football star who was to introduce the flying kick into wrestling and who was to defeat Londos and cause greater commotion in the mat sport. His name was Joe Savoldi, Notre Dame football star, and of his victory over Londos, we will have more to say shortly.

The biggest drawing card in the sport at the time, and for that matter, since the Frank Gotch period, was Londos. Wherever he went, he packed them in. He became to wrestling what Jack Dempsey was to boxing and in the short space of a year, he amassed close to a quarter of a million in exhibitions throughout the country. He was bitter against Lewis and though the Strangler tried repeatedly to get him into the ring with him in order to settle the matter of supremacy, Londos turned a deaf ear to the plea.

Thus, when Lewis learned that everything was not honkey-dorey in the Curley camp, and that Londos steadfastly refused to entertain




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the suggestion that he meet Dick Shikat in a return engagement, since Dick was one of the big attractions in the East and was generally recognized as the best wrestler in the country, Lewis decided to use a little strategy. He applied for readmission into the Curley outfit and explained that he would not only play ball with Curley but would never again cause disruption in the ranks by deserting the man who enabled him to reap a fortune in close to twenty years of wrestling. Curley listened and decided that with Lewis back in the fold, he had an ace in the hole to force the issue with Londos.

Jack at the time was eager to match Londos with Shikat for the Milk Fund bout in New York, a contest that was to have opened the Garden Bowl in Long Island City and which loomed as a big gate attraction, but when Londos continued to balk, Curley sought the aid of the New York commissioners who announced that they would permit Curley to name Shikat and Lewis as challengers and the winner of a bout between them would get first chance at Londos.

They also informed the Greek Adonis that he would have to consent to meet the victor or be shorn of his crown. Thus was paved the way for a solution of the mess into which wrestling had gotten but apparently Londos was not yet ready to bow to the dictates of the powerful New York Boxing Commission and the Lewis-Shikat tilt was accepted as a championship affair.

The match between Lewis and Shikat was staged at the Garden Bowl in Long Island City on June 10, 1932, before a huge gathering and Lewis emerged the victor. Thus for the fifth time in his career, Ed became a champion. 15,901 persons saw the grizzled, hog-fat Lewis, panting like an exhausted hound from more than an hour's grueling punishment at the hands of the powerfully built, trim German athlete, score a surprising victory over his younger and cleverer opponent. The time was an hour, six minutes and seven seconds. Three headlocks, applied in rapid succession, in combination with body slams, brought about the surprising climax.

Shikat was as fresh as a daisy when the end came while the victor was all in. While the bout lacked spectacular wrestling, it was by far the most scientific match seen in more than a decade.

Lewis came into the ring hiding his 236 pounds under a black silk dressing gown, while Shikat was stripped to 218 and a pair of full-length tights as they met in the center of the ring and heard the instructions of the referee.

Several minutes passed before either was off his feet, but Lewis finally secured a headlock and Shikat went down under the punishment, but squirmed out of it with surprising ease. Another headlock sent Shikat down, but when he arose the second time he dropped Lewis with a head scissors and kept him under control for several minutes.

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Lewis recovered and applied a full nelson, but Shikat shook him off. Shikat obtained a headlock, but Lewis whirled out of it and was on the German with a body scissors the next minute. The action was getting faster.

A headlock by Lewis was followed by a spread which Shikat secured and Lewis had to squirm under the ropes to get away, the referee ordering them back into the ring. Lewis's features were distorted, and he was making gestures of anguish. He staggered back under a wallop from Shikat's elbow, grimacing and rubbing his jaw, which made the skeptics smile. It was beginning to look less genuine after they had been in the ring thirty-five minutes.

Up to this point Shikat had held whatever advantage there was. He had inflicted the greater punishment and had been the aggressor most of the time, besides looking less worn than Lewis.

Shikat continued to harass Lewis with torturing toe holds, heartless head locks, head scissors and almost everything else in the book, but Lewis broke them all.

The German was frowning furiously. Lewis was less belligerent in appearance and seemed more concerned with the principal problem at hand, which was throwing his opponent, not frightening him.

After an hour of wrestling, Lewis was going better, but not so good that it looked as though he would win. In fact rain threatened to fall before either of the athletes and the crowd started cheering for something decisive. They clapped, stamped and cheered in unison. The action became more brisk and the end came suddenly. Lewis applied four successive headlocks, tossed Shikat over his shoulder as many times and finally scored a fall.

Arising the second time, Shikat was in a daze and offered no resistance and Lewis again headlocked him. The German's resistance weakened fast, but this time he managed to partly break the hold. But when he reeled away from the clinch, Shikat's face was purple and his tongue protruded. Lewis kept jumping so fast that there was no adequate defense and the fourth slam to the mat ended the bout.

In bringing his man to the floor this time, Lewis went down with him, and, by applying the proper leverage, turned the broad-shouldered German over as they hit the floor. Shikat was only half conscious by this time and his shoulder blades quickly settled to the mat. Gunboat Smith, the referee, threw himself down beside the man, tried to insert one hand under Shikat's back, counted five with his free hand swinging and then pounded Lewis on the back as a signal that it was all over.

A week following the match, the New York commission laid down the law to Londos when he refused to accept Lewis as the challenger. He informed the board that under no circumstances would he agree to such a bout, and the general impression prevailed that the Greek's



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refusal was due to the many previous times in which he was beaten by the Strangler. The commission ruled Londos out of the state and announced that it had shorn him of the championship and declared Lewis the new titleholder in New York.

But Londos was still the champion in other territory, he had the backing of the National Boxing Association in his fight with Curley and that made him the crown wearer in twenty-nine states.

Thus the situation stood for a time, with Londos, George and Lewis plying their trade and parading as champion in whatever locality the fans would accept them. Lewis, with the best claim, engaged in several thrilling bouts, mostly in the East.

On January 24, 1933, he had one of his toughest, a bout with Jim Browning in Madison Square Garden, which he won in 34.52. It was that contest that paved the way for a return engagement a month later that caused the title to change hands again.

In their first bout, the veteran, harassed by the airplane scissors king, turned when the outlook was darkest for him and pinned Gentleman Jim to the surprise of the seven thousand spectators who figured that Browning would beat the Strangler.

The finish came with startling suddenness in a struggle that was crowded with action from start to finish. But it was not a popular victory, albeit it was fair. Lewis, squeezed between the powerful legs of his foe in two successive body scissors holds for a combined time of 11 minutes, turned suddenly in seeking to escape the second hold and came erect with Browning clinging to him.

Then the champion lurched quickly as if falling and slammed his rival down. The force of the fall broke Browning's body scissors. Lewis then twisted Browning into position for an application of the headlock that was brief but effective, gradually forcing Browning's shoulders to the mat and keeping them there until the fall was called by Referee Jed Gahan.

The combination that produced the fall was announced as a combined body slam and headlock.

Lewis weighed 240 and Browning 230.

Browning was not satisfied that Lewis was his master and Jack Curley, sensing a big house in a return bout, got the Strangler's consent for the match. They clashed in the same arena on February 21, and this time a new champion was crowned. The Kentucky veteran was pinned in 57 minutes and 50 seconds.

With a quick turnover and his favorite body scissors Browning, aggressor through the match, the man on top in the majority of times they went to the mat and with a wider and more punishing, more effective variety of holds, pinned the shoulders of the champion who, in a wrestling career extending over about twenty years, has been thrown only about half a dozen times.

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Conquerors of Lewis who come to mind are the two Zbyszkos—Wladek and the elder Stanislaus—Joe Stecher and Wayne (Big) Munn.

When Referee Jack Denning tapped the body of Browning in signal of victory, creating a new champion, Browning was astride an almost inert Lewis, his full weight of 230 pounds pressing Lewis flat on his back near the defending champion's own corner.

The finish was a surprise, for Lewis has been winning consistently.

Browning was Lewis's master at all times. He manhandled the defending champion in clean wrestling, which had not one single objectionable incident.

Lewis' headlock was conspicuous by its absence, not particularly because the hold has lost its effectiveness, although it is fair to assume it is not as dangerous as of yore, but specifically because Browning refused to be drawn into any trap that exposed him for long to the hold.

Only once did Lewis apply a real, punishing headlock. This came when the men had been grappling thirty-six minutes, and it lasted for only one minute before the powerful Bostonian tore himself free and almost tossed Lewis into the laps of spectators.

As the match passed the fifty-seven-minute mark, Lewis appeared to take a new lease on life. He brought into play the hip and headlock with which he customarily gives forewarning of a succession of headlocks calculated to reduce a foe to submission.

Five times Lewis tossed his rival about like a sack of meat, each time Browning coming erect head down, groggy to all intents and purposes, but leading directly at his foe.

The sixth time Lewis tried for a headlock, his hold slipped. The Kentuckian pitched face forward to the floor, landing on all fours, unbelieving. Quick as a flash Browning turned and with the one motion, pounced upon Lewis who was an open target for a body scissors.

In the wink of an eye, Browning fastened the hold, went down on his own back, twisted and twirled Lewis high in the air, dropped the Kentuckian solidly on the ring floor, on his back.

Then he came up astride Lewis, putting all the pressure of which he was capable into his powerful legs, until Lewis lay prostrate and flat and Referee Denning tapped Browning with the signal that brought the Bostonian victory and the championship. Lewis weighed 238 pounds.

With Browning crowned king in the East and Londos continuing to make trouble for the Curley-Mondt group, plans were laid for the defeat of the Greek, or at least, to discredit him with the wrestling public, and the means adopted was to take him off his guard and match him with a grappler friendly to the Curley combine, but unbe-



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known to Londos and his mentor. The medium was Joe Savoldi, famous Notre Dame football star, who had only recently tossed his lot into the professional wrestling field and who, it was thought, would prove an easy mark for the Greek.

Toots Mondt maneuvered the affair and with the aid of Chicago politicians, he was able to get Londos' consent for a match to be staged at the Chicago Stadium on April 8, 1933. There, before 8,000 fans, Jumping Joe gained a fall from the champion in 20 minutes and 26 seconds and was proclaimed the new king of the heavyweights. And that decision started a new wrestling war. The real fireworks had just begun.

Ed White, manager of Londos, claimed that the match, limited to one fall with a 90-minute time limit, was not a championship affair simply because of a ruling by the old Illinois State Athletic Commission that all wrestling matches were merely "exhibitions." The spectators howled White down.

Then Londos issued a statement in which he denied that Savoldi had thrown him, blaming Referee Bob Managoff for everything that happened.

"It was not a fall," Londos said. "I had a Japanese scissors on Savoldi from an underneath position. I was partly on my side and on my shoulder. Savoldi's feet were tangled in the ropes. Referee Managoff tapped me on the shoulder with orders to break. I understood from that we were to start wrestling all over again from a standing position because Savoldi's feet were tangled in the ropes. I let go and the next instant the referee tapped Savoldi in token of victory. I repeat, it was not a fall."

Referee Managoff declared that he had given the bout to Savoldi because Joe had legally won the fall. The affair was then taken before the Boxing Commission and Joe Triner, the chairman, ruled that the bout was not a championship and that therefore Londos could not have lost his title.

Then, to still further strengthen Londos's hold in the controversy, the National Wrestling Association, which was a 100 per cent Londos group, ruled in Jemmy's favor and thus, when Savoldi was brought east to tackle Jim Browning for the championship, there was little interest in the bout.

Before going into this, however, we will give a short sketch of Savoldi. Jumping Joe, christened Giuseppi Savoldi, was born in Milano, Italy, in 1909. He attended Notre Dame University where, under the tutelage of the great Knute Rockne, he starred for that organization during the years of 1928, 1929 and 1930. After his graduation, he took to coaching for a time and then, at the suggestion of Strangler Lewis, he became a professional wrestler.

Savoldi worked his way through college. When he wasn't on the

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rootball field, he was doing odd jobs to make both ends meet. He joined the ranks of professional wrestlers because he saw more money in that than he could earn at coaching and has been making plenty since. Naturally, his reputation on the football field aided him considerably in wrestling.

His specialty in wrestling is the flying tackle. In fact, no man in the game who uses that dangerous tackle, can hit a fellow while going through the air as can Savoldi. Several of the boxing commissions, deeming Joe's tackle too dangerous, have banned it.

Normally, Joe scales about 204 pounds. He is a husky fellow, stands 5 feet 11 inches, is 26 years old, is an affable, intelligent man, and his whole life seems to be absorbed in his vocation.

"My being born in Italy was purely an accident," says Joe, "for had it not been that my folks, who at the time were living in Three Oaks, Michigan, were told to hasten back to Italy, where my mother's father, keeper of a restaurant, had been attacked by bandits and fatally knifed, I would have been born here. My grandfather had driven his team from Castano Primo to replenish his supplies in a distant town, and was on the way back when the robbers closed in on him. He was left for dead in the bottom of his wagon and the horses continued the trip without being guided.

"The stabbing had left my grandfather close to death and my mother was advised to hurry back to Italy if she again was to see her dad alive. She sailed with my father, a few weeks before I was born. She traveled with all haste to the deathbed of her father. I was born at one o'clock the next morning and grandfather succumbed to his wounds three hours later.

"When my folks returned to Three Oaks they left me behind, feeling that I never would live to make the trip. I began to feel my strength when I was five years old, following the plow and the harvesters having filled me out until I was a husky young farmer.

"When I was seven years old, just before the outbreak of the big war, my parents returned to Italy to take me to the United States. Passage had been secured and we were ready for the trip when I developed whooping cough and port officials refused to pass me.

"Father and mother left me behind a second time and there I remained until I was twelve years old. My sister and a brother, Clement, were born in Three Oaks and I had never seen them.

"I was twelve when father and mother came back and this time I saw the country that had so nearly been mine in the first place.

"The day I set foot on American soil I couldn't speak a word of English, nor could I read or write. Then came a lot of intensive study. I went through grammar, high school and was practically through my fourth year at Notre Dame when I got the 'gate' for getting married."



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Chapter XXXII

# Londos Defeats Browning

WHEN Joe Savoldi gained the decision over Jim Londos at Chicago, he automatically jumped himself into the big moneyed circle in wrestling. Immediately following that disputed triumph, Joe became a headliner throughout the country. He was taken in tow by a syndicate that had guaranteed him the sum of one hundred thousand dollars for the first year, and as that combine had its membership in the Curley-Mondt-Bowser-Fabiani group of promoters, it didn't require much effort to obtain plenty of work for the former Notre Dame football star.

The first step toward simplifying the championship muddle and strengthening the hold of Browning on the crown was to arrange a match between Savoldi and Gentleman Jim for the Yankee Stadium. The promoters felt confident that, with Joe's popularity as a football player and his recent defeat of Londos, with its attending ballyhoo, the Browning-Savoldi match would be a good gate attraction, but unfortunately, they had failed to figure on the Weather Man, who threatened rain all day of the bout but held off until the slim crowd was sitting comfortably on the spacious lawn of the Stadium.

Then, just as the match preliminaries were started, the rain came down in torrents and not only made it difficult for the wrestlers to do their best, but drenched the spectators and kept the attendance down to a minimum. Thus Savoldi's first appearance as "champion" of Londos' territory proved a huge flop financially, and also was disastrous for Jumping Joe, who was defeated, and thus Browning's claim to world honors was strengthened. The bout went an hour, fifty minutes and five seconds when the curfew law halted it and Browning was declared the victor.

That bout was one of the poorest exhibitions given by champions or claimants in many moons and thoroughly displeased the spectators. Savoldi displayed little knowledge of the finer points of the game and Browning proved his master from the start. In fact, it appeared that, had Gentleman Jim felt so inclined, he would have tossed Savoldi at any time. Instead, Jim elected to give the slim gathering a run for its money and carried Joe along, and so obvious was his action that it aroused the ire of the fans. The drop in patronage in New York seems to date back to that match, for whereas Browning was the recipient of plenty of applause on every appearance previously, his popularity turned to boos and catcalls on almost every occasion thereafter.

Following the contest with Savoldi, Browning continued to ply his



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trade as champion until such time as it was convenient for the change. When the attendance began to fall off and it became apparent that Gentleman Jim was not much of a showman, and that so long as he held the reins over the heavyweight division the promoters could hope for only a small return for their investment, they began to prepare for Londos' return to the top. That was the cause for the peace pipe being smoked by the rival pacts and for arrangements being completed for taking Londos back into the Curley-Mondt fold. It also was the reason why a Browning-Londos match was hastened and staged under auspices of Mrs. Hearst's Milk Fund.

In the meantime, however, Browning was kept busy with the defense of his laurels six days every week, and among the stars of the mat world whom he tackled and beat were Hans Steinke, Joe Malcewicz, Gus Sonnenberg, Henri De Glane, Matros Kirelenko, Sammy Stein, Ed Strangler Lewis and many others, but by far his best bout and his most important was with Ed Don George, with whom he clashed three times, each bout resulting in a draw.

Of the three, the best match was staged in the Garden on December 19, 1933, and resulted in an hour and forty minute draw, the longest bout staged in New York in a number of years. Although George had a shade the better of the wrestling, the judges called the affair an even one, thus saving the title for Browning. When the men had wrestled without a fall up to eleven o'clock, the curfew law was waived and they were permitted to continue. When Referee George Bothner saw that George had almost pinned Jim's shoulders, he let the men go on for another fifteen minutes. Seven times Browning had his famous lethal body scissors on George, but the New England champion worked out of it. When the finish was announced, both men were on the verge of collapse.

The season's banner crowd saw the men in action, a total of $16,651 being taken in at the gate. The bout was a natural, with George risking his New England and Canadian titles and Browning his world championship in so far as New York was concerned. George was the first opponent that Browning had failed to toss since he won the title from Lewis a year previously. It was a tough, scientific match, and had a decision been rendered in favor of either man, George would have earned it.

In a fierce rally after the first hour, George had Browning down and almost out in a corner, but lost that advantage when he attempted a finishing flying tackle. Their heads met and both toppled over, Browning recovering first and thus abating his most serious threat.

Browning snapped on his first body scissors at the end of the first five minutes, but George leaped out and landed on his feet as Browning raised him by leg power for a spin. Three minutes later the champion again got his favorite hold and once more George was out



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in a jiffy. As he came out he seized Browning with an arm lock, which he held for three minutes. Another arm lock was more speedily broken by Browning.

They had followed an exhausting pace for half an hour when George seized Jim in a headlock, but by violent struggling Browning broke away in a little more than a minute. It was hard, scientific wrestling unmarred by rough-house tactics.

A painful toehold had George in a bad way for two minutes at the forty-five-minute mark, and when he finally wriggled out and took a headlock, Browning easily extricated himself. At this stage the Missourian appeared to be slowly gaining the upper hand.

A toe hold had Browning in considerable distress at fifty minutes, but while George was tugging at the champion's foot, Jim slipped the other leg around and locked his ankles together, catching Don around the middle with his best scissors grip. Browning then applied terrific pressure and the challenger groaned deeply. As Browning attempted to raise him for the slam, the challenger once more broke away.

At the end of an hour, Browning, with a sixteen-pound weight advantage, seemed to be steadily wearing down his man, but still could not get his leg grips functioning effectively. At this point the champion narrowly escaped being pinned by a crotch and body hold.

At fifteen minutes to curfew, George brought the champion down with a hammerlock but could not keep him on the mat. Browning took the same hold but George leaped and snapped on a head scissors. He brought the Missourian down hard with this, Browning's head thumping heavily on the floor.

Three minutes of this and Browning staggered to his feet and slumped in a corner. George launched two wild tackles, fell underneath, got up again and butted the champion in the stomach.

Again Browning fell in his corner. The challenger pulled him clear of the ropes and threw him clear. Browning came up slowly as George was charging again. Their heads met and both toppled over badly dazed.

Browning was the first to recover. He made a blind stagger at George, who fell back with one arm around the ropes and the other about his opponent.

George's offensive bogged down in an armlock which Browning took with only five minutes to go. Ed Don broke it by a supreme effort.

At this point Referee George Bothner announced that he would extend the time limit an extra quarter of an hour, or until 11:15.

There was little punishing action in the first five minutes of overtime, both men apparently saving themselves for the finish.

Two severe headlocks had Browning dizzy and a flying tackle downed him again, but he came back with his seventh body scissors

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and this time twirled George twice. The challenger stopped him then with a head clasp. They were on their feet at the final bell.

With that bout over, Browning started an intensive winter campaign that carried him through almost every state in the Union and wound up with his match with Londos at the Garden's Long Island Bowl on June 24, 1934, when Londos regained the world laurels. When the bout was over, the handsome Greek challenger became the undisputed world champion in all territory but New England and Canada by pinning the shoulders of the defender in an hour and ten minutes and ten seconds.

Londos won with a crotch and head hold and a body slam after a struggle in which he was, for the most part, on the defensive. For more than an hour he was subjected to all the strength, power and skill of the giant, who towered above him half a foot and outweighed him thirty-eight pounds.

It seemed at times that Londos was helpless as Browning punished him with every hold at his command and with all the power he could summon to the various locks and grips.

It was from a near approach to defeat that Londos flashed the attack, a startling, furious offensive, which brought him victory. He had been gripped and twice twisted in the eighth of Browning's famed body scissors, a viselike clutch with which the Missourian crushed the Greek's body for two minutes shortly after passing the hour mark. The State Athletic Commission's rule, automatically breaking a hold when contestants crawl or are thrown or twisted under the ropes, saved Londos at the time.

Londos took a short breathing spell before launching the attack which provided a dramatic finish to the match. Leaping in quickly, the Greek clasped his foe about the body and lifted him aloft.

Like a sack of meal, Londos plunged Browning heavily to the mat. The Missourian acted as if his back and shoulders were hurt under the impact of the slam and leaned weakly against the ropes until Londos pressed in, raised him from the mat and slammed again.

Five more times Londos repeated this operation, and with each slam Browning grew weaker and dizzier. On the eighth slam, Londos threw the weight of his own body upon that of the defending champion and pressed his shoulders to the mat until Referee George Bothner patted the back of the Greek in the age-old signal of wrestling victory that brought with it the heavyweight title beyond dispute in New York State.

The crowd of twenty thousand fans paid receipts of forty thousand dollars for the match. In the gathering, which only partly filled the huge bowl on the Long Island flatlands, were men and women who are prominent in the life of the city and state. Typical of the sport,



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the struggle drew fans from many walks of life and from other fields of sports.

In winning the title, Londos came again into possession of laurels he first held four years previously, when he conquered Dick Shikat in an elimination tournament.

Browning, on the other hand, became the fifth sport champion to be dethroned in the ring of the Bowl. The others were in boxing and, in the order of their dethronement, were Max Schmeling and Jack Sharkey, heavyweight champions; Jimmy McLarnin, welterweight king, and Primo Carnera, who lost the championship under the driving fists of Max Baer.

It seemed that Browning was well on the road to victory. He had done most of the work on the attack, and had matched his own speed with that of the Greek without suffering by comparison. Again and again Browning tried to claim his foe as a victim of the famed body scissors. Five times the hold was hardly applied before Londos slipped free. But on three distinct occasions Browning encircled Londos's body with his powerful legs and on these occasions the Greek suffered.

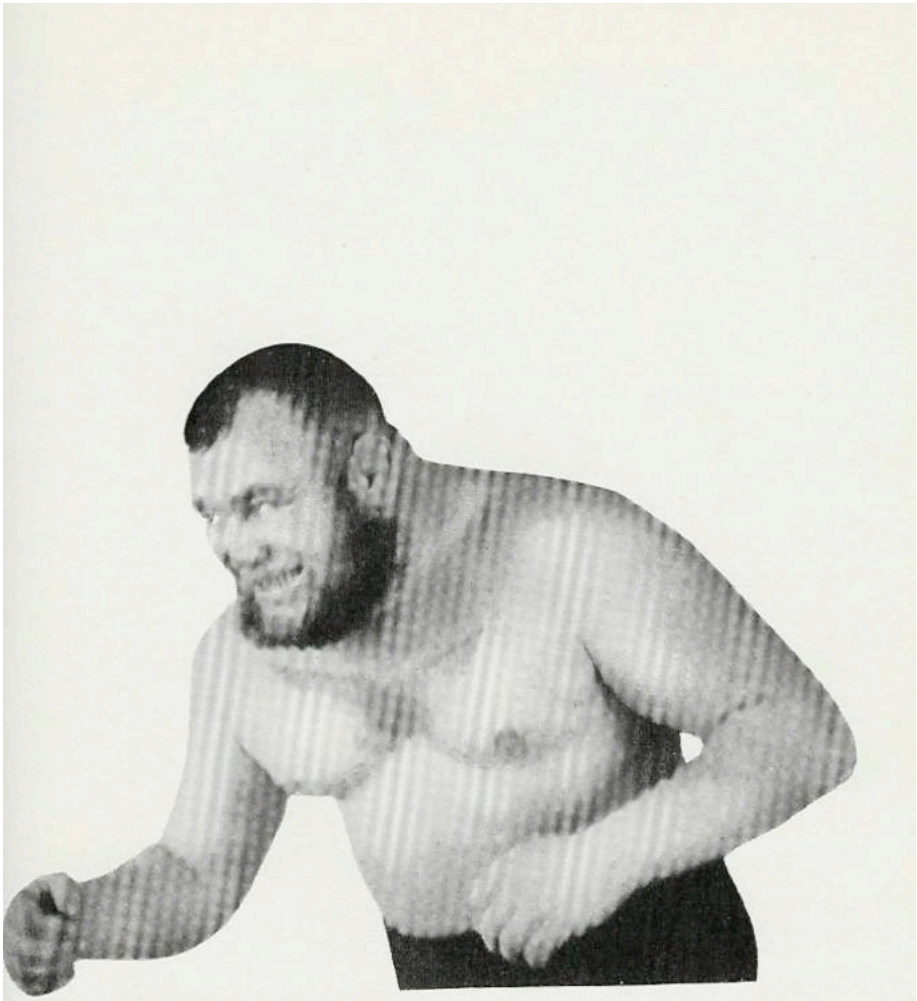
It was out of the last of these scissors holds, and the third of the really effective ones, that Londos took the offensive and almost in the wink of an eye, became the champion with what has been known heretofore as his airplane spin and body hold.

Londos shook off every hold at the command of Browning in surviving. He was pressed in headlocks, creased in body scissors holds, pressed in head scissors grips, twisted with wrist and arm locks and punished with leg spreads and once with a hammer lock.

Countering this variety of holds, Londos placed his reliance mainly in the toe hold. Twice he applied the Japanese arm lock, but at no time until the crowded moments approaching the finish could it be said that he really had Browning in danger.

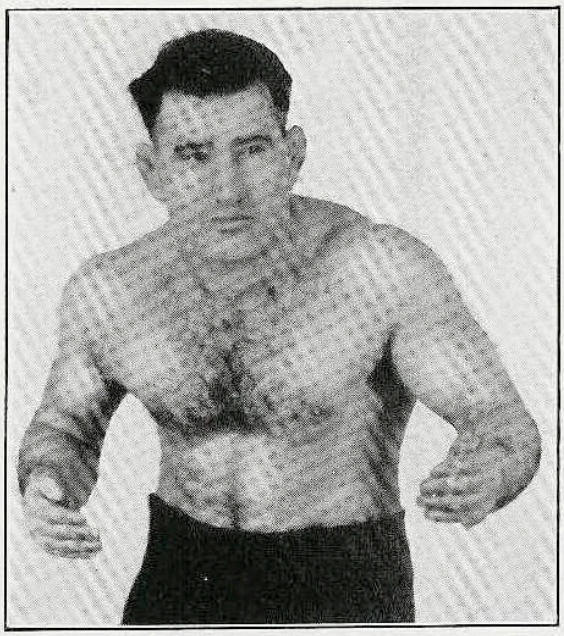
Before discussing Londos' new reign as the titleholder, we will give our readers a review of the deposed champion's career. Jim Browning was christened James Orvan Browning. He scales two hundred and twenty pounds, stands six feet two inches, and like most of the stars of the present era, he was a good football player. Gentleman Jim, as the muscle tamers call him, comes from Verona, Missouri, made his wrestling start through Ohio, where, with the aid of his famous body scissors, or airplane spin as some call it, he tossed all his opponents and attracted the attention of Paul Bowser, the New England promoter. Paul was so thrilled by Browning's spectacular hold that he urged Jim to go to Boston to perform for him, and it was that turn that finally enabled Jim to land on the top rung of the ladder. He is a powerfully built fellow whose legs are his chief asset in trade.

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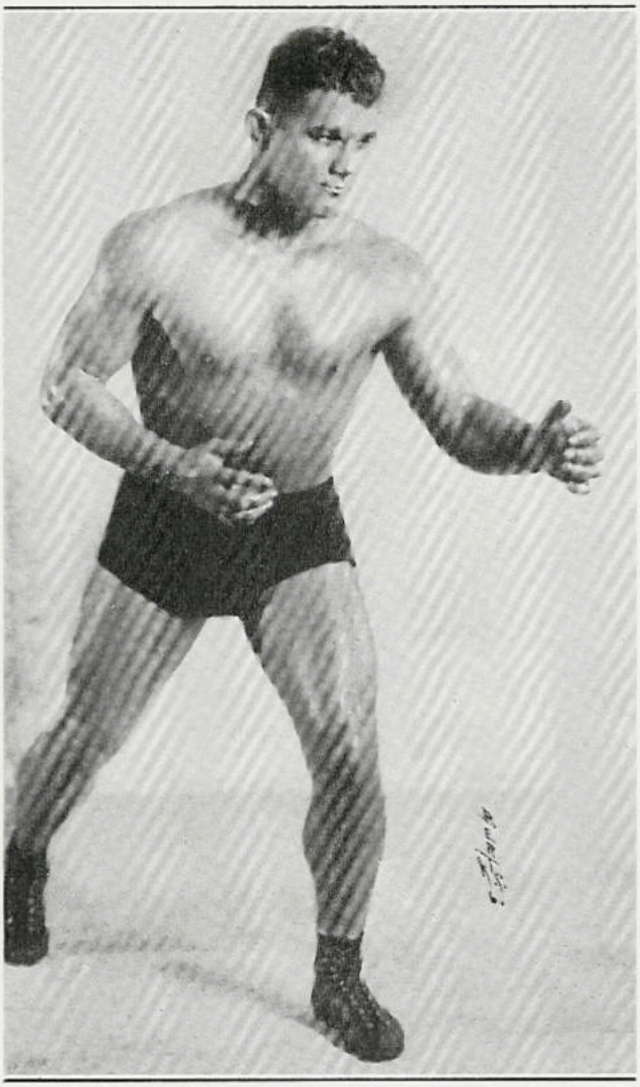
Serge Kalmikoff, the first of the bearded wrestlers to invade the United States in 1933.


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Jack Sherry, a splendid wrestler who defied the "trust" and found himself out in the cold. He was born in Alaska.

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Gino Garibaldi, a powerful, clever Italian wrestler, who ranks high in the profession.


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Renato Gardini, Italian champion, whose loss to Stecher in the Seventy-first Regiment Armory of New York, in 1926, caused a riot.

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Browning's airplane spin was a devilish grip. His legs, working like writhing anacondas, wrapped themselves around the victim's frame, and as if the body scissors weren't enough, Jim churned the air with his captive in a pinwheel way that was both captivating and exciting. The poundage in pressure when the body was squeezed was terrific. The victim could scarcely breathe. According to Browning, it was equivalent to twenty-three hundred pounds. It had been measured with steel springs.

The hold was so thrilling that folks went away disappointed if Jim happened to throw anyone in any way but through the whirl of that propeller flip.

That he could take Lewis's perspiring body between his thighs and legs and whirl him through space, was astonishing. It was a spectacular test of strength.

Jim perfected the hold by filling wine casks with water and using the barrels as an opponent. Many hours a week he had practiced whirling the barrel around in the grip of his thighs and legs, above his own body, without allowing the barrel to escape.

Browning was born in Verona, Missouri, twenty-eight years ago. He has been a professional for about eight years. He went to Verona High School, and there he took up the sport. Jim was captain of the high school team for two years, but never thought about entering the pro ranks until three years later. It was while at Drury, where he was taking up a special physical training course, that he got the idea. He saw others wrestle and figured he could do as well.

One day he watched Joe Stecher, the body scissors king, in training and saw him squeeze a sack of wheat between his legs. He inquired the "whys and wherefores" and, upon being told, he decided he would go Stecher one better, and that's how he took up his training with a barrel. Browning died in the spring of 1936.





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Chapter XXXIII

# Londos' Life Story

BEFORE we go into details about some of the leading matches in which Jim Londos engaged as a champion after his defeat of Jim Browning, we will review his life. The career of the Greek Adonis parallels in excitement and in thrills that of Hackenschmidt, Gotch, Jenkins, Strangler Lewis, the elder Zbyszko and other famed stars of the mat. In fact, if we take the word of Londos, we must go on record in this story of the history of wrestling, with the remark that not more than four wrestlers in the modern era of the sport have had as many thrills and exciting experiences as had Jemmy. The Greek idol declared that only Gotch, Hackenschmidt and Zbyszko excelled him in the number of thrilling exploits, and that in the matter of competition, only Zbyszko and Strangler Lewis had engaged in more contests.

According to Londos, when the midwife trudged the stony road leading to the little house of mud and straw on the farm of Theophelo Theophelus, near Knopodt, Mycenae County, in the little kingdom of Afamemnom, Greece, she left at the hut a fifteen-pound boy. The lad was the thirteenth in the family and he was christened Chris Theophelo, better known to the present generation of wrestling fans as Jim Londos. Eleven sons and one daughter preceded the arrival of "Jemmy," who was born the day after New Year's, 1897, a lucky day, according to the Greeks.

In his youth, the lad proved the strongest in the family and his father made good use of the boy's exceptional strength by having him lead ten sheep and five goats to the pasture daily. He also helped his dad pick olives and figs and worked around the vineyard. That outdoor life proved its value to Jemmy when he later turned to his present vocation. He engaged in bare-back riding for the sport of it and there were few in his locality who could beat him.

He milked the cows and goats and soon became the family handy man, even though he was only a boy. When he went to school in Argos, he walked daily about five miles to and from the place of learning. It was at school that he first learned about America and he yearned to come to our land. His father, a militarist at heart, thought otherwise. He pictured Chris in the uniform of his army, but the mother pictured her boy in the garb of a Greek priest. Neither appealed to Jemmy, and he continued for some time to tend the sheep and goats, until the yearning for America grew stronger and stronger.

According to Londos, "Always I pictured to myself a large boat on which I was a stowaway. I saw myself as a sailor before the



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mast; as a worker on the ship, and the boat headed for America.

"I never dreamed of a career as an athlete until one day when I saw my father, who was a powerful man, wrestle with a two-hundred-pound youth. The youth provoked the match and my father said: 'I am an old man, and it will do you no good to beat me, but if I beat you, it will be bad for you.' My father threw him twice.

"Soon after that I saw him grab a full grown man, who had mistreated a child, seize him by the wrist, swing him around, and give him a tanning with a stick. My admiration for father soon changed to a determination to emulate him.

"At eleven years I began to rebel at home life. I was too much like my father, a fact we both recognized, and once when he whipped me, I cried and then ran away from home and went to relatives in Argos, but later returned. My father argued with me and said I should go to school and then join the army. By the time I was twelve I could think of nothing but America, and finally it was agreed I could go with Chris Jekas, now a resident of San Francisco."

Londos then went on to tell of his early days in this country. Let him continue his story:

"I was fortunate to be engaged as a strong man in a vaudeville act and this led to my employment as bottom man in a tumbling act and later I became one of the brothers in the act.

"Tiring of this, I quit, to seek laurels as a wrestler, and was booked in a burlesque house and paid three dollars for my work. Then I returned to vaudeville again as a bottom man and strong man in a tumbling act. I saved a few dollars, heard of an opportunity for a wrestler on a card at Santa Cruz, went there, wrestled, didn't get paid and went hungry for three days—nine meals—after which I bumped into a friend, who bought me a dinner and loaned me money to get back to 'Frisco.

"I had a few matches around San Francisco after this and after winning several was offered five hundred dollars and expenses to go to Portland, Ore., and wrestle a man named Berson. I beat him, was paid, and I felt like I had opened a gold mine. That was in 1916 or 1917.

"About this time I decided to change my name because it was too long. For hours I debated the value of names. Jack London was a popular hero, especially in California. I thought of the name London. But I was Greek, so finally I took the 'n' out of London and inserted an 's' and became Jimmie Londos. It sounded Greek, even if it wasn't.

"I got a match in Hepner, Ore., another in Butte, Mont., and while waiting for something to turn up, spent all my money. Offered a match at The Dalles, Wash., I beat my way there on a freight train, defeated my man in an hour and fifty-six minutes and was paid



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seventy-five cents. I hoboed my way all over the West, wrestled when I could, went hungry, spent nights around the jungle camp fires with the hoboes and, late in 1917, beat across the country to Chicago.

"I failed to get a match in Chicago, and was in a bad way for money when I was offered a chance to wrestle the famous Dr. B. F. Roller in Canton, Ohio. Dr. Roller's own brother loaned me the railroad fare to go to Canton, where I beat Roller and won a small purse. After the match Roller said to me: 'I wish I were your age; I would like to wrestle you again.' Roller was through; that was one of his last matches.

"I arrived in New York in November, 1910, and was supposed to go to the home of my brother in Providence, R. I., but I did not go to Providence. I knew America as the land of the free, a place where one could do as he pleased, and I was afraid that if I went to the home of my brother I would again fall under the stern discipline of Greece, so, using what money I had left, I went across the country to San Francisco and lived with Jekas and another family.

"My first job was that of errand boy for a grocer on Sacramento Street, on the edge of Chinatown. I was paid five dollars a week. My next job was up in the mountains with a construction gang, where I worked as a water boy and lived in a freight car.

"At fifteen I saw my first professional wrestling match between Zbyszko and Demetral, the Greek, and I paid twenty-five cents for a ticket and sat high up in the bleachers. Zbyszko looked like a whale, with a chest as big as a beer barrel. I wanted to see him at close quarters, and after the match followed him to the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco.

"I was so impressed with what I had seen that I decided to quit my job in the mountains and strive to be a wrestler. I got a job in a San Francisco grocery store and joined the Y. M. C. A. I weighed 149 pounds and was relieved of much of my ego when a little boy of 120 pounds pinned my shoulders to the mat. I worked on a milk wagon, in a department store, and with construction gangs, but every night returned to the 'Y.'

"I began winning amateur titles at the 'Y' in 1914 and, in 1915, having won the heavyweight championship, decided to embark upon a professional career. A boy told me I could earn fifty cents wrestling someone at the Majestic Theater in San Francisco, and I went there, and wrestled a man after the show. There was no mat, just a carpet, and I won and was paid fifty cents.

"I quit my job and soon found I had nothing to eat. Someone told me I could earn some money posing for art students at the University of California in Berkeley, and I went over there and found a job at thirty cents an hour. It lasted several weeks and then I returned

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across the bay to San Francisco, broke again. Once more I experienced the pangs of hunger.

"I went next to Norfolk, Va., where I defeated Ivan Linow, and after several months, during which I was alternately broke and hungry, I arrived in New York, where I begged promoters to give me a chance. After wrestling twice for nothing I was booked to meet William Demetral, the Greek champion—the man I had seen wrestle Zbyszko in San Francisco. I defeated him, and was declared the Greek champion, upon which occasion I wrote my father telling him the news.

"He had been opposed to my athletic efforts, but now he softened and wrote me that the Greek championship was not enough, I would have to win the world's title and so I resolved to do just that."

With that part of his narrative completed, Londos sighed, then laughed as he continued the story of his life.

"The ups and downs of life. An experience worth all the money in the world. One day we crave for mere subsistence and the next we stand on the pedestal!"

So remarked Londos as he told of his early difficulties. I could see in Londos's eyes what thoughts were travelling through his brains, and to get to the depths of his thoughts, I remarked:

"Jimmy, to what, or to whom, do you attribute your success?"

"To my manager," he replied without hesitation. "You see, a good manager can make a man and a bad one can break him, but in my case, I fortunately picked out a real live wire, and though we have had our differences in recent months, I must candidly admit that, if it were not for Ed White, who handled my affairs when I was the world champoin, I wouldn't have made the success I attained."

It was White who rescued Londos at the time he was hungry and discouraged and wanted to toss up the sponge. Ed nursed Jemmy along, added weight to his frame, put his mind in a state of rest and then trained him to acquire the finer points of the sport. It was not until 1929 that their partnership, which lasted four years, was formed, and prior to that, Londos had undergone many trying experiences.

Londos had won the Greek championship in New York in 1920, but it was a hollow title. He scaled only 178 pounds at the time. Among his victims in those days were Charley Cutler, Jess Westergaard, Joe Stecher, Hussane the Turk, Earl Caddock and other stars in the period between the end of the World War and 1922, and even at that time he was considered a topnotch wrestler.

Then he became afflicted with trachoma and all the money he had saved was used to cure the ailment. The following year, finding himself without funds, he went to St. Louis and there he was matched with the man whom he has always regarded as his idol—the elder Zbyszko—who had agreed to toss both Londos and another opponent



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within the hour. He succeeded in turning the trick on the first opponent, but he failed to pin Londos' shoulders. That made Londos popular in St. Louis, where he always remained their wrestling idol. Jemmy performed in that city, Chicago, Kansas City, Cincinnati and New York and had considerable success.

Twice in the St. Louis Coliseum he met Strangler Lewis and he dropped both matches, but it must be remembered that Londos was only a light-heavyweight at the time and Lewis was two hundred pounds or more. Lewis defeated Jemmy twelve other times, and in later years, when the enmity between the pair was bitter and the rivalry was exceptionally keen, Lewis and his ballyhoo artists always harped on those fourteen defeats of Londos, but until 1935, Lewis would never give Londos a chance to meet him when the Strangler held the title and Londos asserted that the reason for the refusal was because Lewis feared to be licked by the Greek after he had become a full-fledged heavyweight. At any rate, when Lewis finally did give Londos the chance, the Greek won and of that match we shall have more to say later.

In 1928, after Lewis had repeatedly attacked Londos in the press, Jemmy went to France with the avowed purpose of forcing Lewis, then the titleholder, into a match, but on the day that Londos arrived in Paris, Lewis left for England. Londos then went on to Greece, where the Greek government sponsored a match with Karol Zbyszko which drew a throng of seventy thousand. Jemmy's father escorted the son into the ring—an ancient custom. Londos had donated his services for the war orphans' charity and the match brought in two hundred thousand dollars to the fund. After a sojourn of several months, Londos returned to the States, where he resumed his attacks on Lewis in an effort to force him to accept his challenge for a titular bout. It was just about this time that he met White and formed the partnership that brought to him fame and fortune.

Londos is an all-around athlete. He is a splendid horseman, swims, boxes, plays handball and tennis and likes to fish. He attributes his splendid health and strength to the drinking of pure olive oil. Jemmy confided to me that ever since he was a kid he has taken olive oil as a health diet.

"Everyone who wants to be strong and healthy should drink at least half a cup of olive oil daily," said Londos, as he concluded his life story.

With the possible exception of Frank Gotch, there never was a more colorful champion in American wrestling history than Jim Londos. The Greek Adonis had what is commonly known as "It," with a capital—"T." He was dramatic and knew the meaning of the word showmanship.

When one realizes that Londos received $100,000 for his bout with

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O'Mahony in which he lost the crown, and drew by far the largest gates of any wrestler in this country's grappling history, then he can properly judge how important a factor the Greek was in the success of the mat sport. Londos at this writing, I am told by my friend Jack Curley, is worth close to $2,000,000, a remarkable tribute to sports.

Not only was Jim Londos a great wrestler, but regardless of the set-up matches in which he indulged, due to the rivalry among the American promoters, he still, in my opinion, ranked among the first ten grapplers of all time so far as America is concerned. In his prime, at his best, he was as good as was Joe Stecher, Earl Caddock, Wladek Zbyszko, Charley Cutler, Tom Jenkins, and several other notables, but if I were asked, to compare him with the world's greatest, I would place Gotch, Hackenschmidt, Stanislaus Zbyszko, Gama and Strangler Lewis ahead of him.

Unfortunately, Londos came at a time when promotorial warfare detracted from the greatness of certain wrestlers, including the Greek because of the many title claimants and the subsequent cries of set-ups and prearranged bouts that invariably greeted every successful defense of the title made by Londos. This, regardless of his known superiority over the man whom he conquered.

The first year of Londos' championship matches after he had won the title from Jim Browning, were replete with sensational bouts. He was by far the most active champion the division ever had and it was not until he clashed with O'Mahony, that he was tossed. He went through the year with a total of 221 bouts, a record for a title holder. And during that same period, his share of the gate receipts amounted to more than a quarter of a million.

Of those matches, he clashed with every known top-notcher who was appearing in this country and his record shows that he met some of his boys as often as a dozen times, but the average, in various parts of the country, were seven. Among those whom he engaged two or more times, were Garibaldi, Marshall, Ernie Dusek, Rudy Dusek, Jim McMillen, Dick Shikat, Sandor Szabo, Joe Savoldi and the bewhiskered Dean, among others. But his most sensational battles, besides the O'Mahony contest, were those with Everett Marshall, Dick Shikat, Ed Don George, and Strangler Lewis.

It was on July 19, 1934, that Paul Bowser, Boston promoter and sponsor of Ed Don George, tried to have the matter of supremacy between his charge and Londos settled at Fenway Park in the Hub, but before a gathering of 30,000 fans, the pair wrestled for four hours and seven minutes to a draw. The standard bearers of the rival factions who had only a few weeks previously smoked the pipe of peace in their promotorial warfare, started wrestling just before 11 o'clock, and didn't leave the mat again until four hours later.



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Each groggy, on the verge of collapse, perspiration dripping from their bodies, welcomed the action of the referee. After knocking heads and toppling through the ropes, the exhausted pair managed to crawl back through the ropes, but practically helpless. Londos staggered over to where George stood and applied a wristlock which was weak and George tossed him to the mat with a feeble backfall and as he completed the trick, Ed toppled over and then fell face downward.

The shock of the fall robbed them of their last bit of stamina and both were unconscious when the referee decided to halt proceedings.

The amazing exhibition drew a gate of $60,110. The match was a best two out of three falls basis, and each had scored a fall early in the bout, Londos after applying his famous Japanese leg lock, followed by airplane spins and body slams, and George with the aid of a flying tackle, followed by a headlock, flying mare and body slams.

First aid treatment was required before either could leave the ring. It was one of the greatest struggles seen in New England in many years and in many respects, resembled the famous Lewis-Zbyszko bout in the old Garden, but more spectacular.

The second important match in which Londos engaged as a champion, was that with Everett Marshall, who within the month previously, had twice disposed of Dick Shikat and had climbed to the top rung of the challengers' post, so far as the Eastern group of wrestling promoters, headed by Jack Curley, Ray Fabiani and Paul Bowser, was concerned. The match with Marshall was staged in Madison Square Garden on November 19, 1934 for the benefit of an Italian charity and when the affair was over, Jim Londos was still the champion.

One hour and ten minutes and two seconds after the bout had gotten under way, Marshall lay prone on the canvas, the victim of a punishing leg spread. Until the Colorado grappler succumbed, however, he had given Londos many anxious moments.

It was a thrilling encounter and the fans who turned out for the benefit program witnessed one of the finest exhibitions of wrestling. Marshall weighed 220, the champion, 200.

Marshall's wildness really cost him whatever chance he had of annexing the crown. Twice he missed flying tackles and landed on the concrete floor, the second fall paving the way for the finish.

It was the second fall that left the challenger in such condition that he was an easy prey for Londos's finishing tactics. A few minutes before the end Marshall launched a series of flying tackles. Three times his aim was true and each time Londos was thrown to the canvas.

But on Marshall's fourth attempted tackle, the Greek sidestepped and the Westerner went flying over the top rope and into the press box.

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After the count of nine, Marshall rolled back into the ring. Londos rushed in, dropped his man and applied the leg spread. As Marshall weakened, his shoulders were pinned to the mat.

Following that bout, on December 11, Londos decided to give Shikat a chance to regain the crown he had lost to the Greek five years previously. For three years there was a bitter feud between the two bcause Londos steadfastly refused to tackle Shikat, and it was only after peace had been made between the Londos group and the Curley organization that the Greek agreed to the bout because he then knew that regardless of superiority, he would be fully protected against a possible double cross.

It took Londos 1:23:31 to accomplish the downfall of his arch enemy of the mat. During most of the first hour Londos was on the defensive. Shikat employed his strength and a weight advantage to worry the champion with many punishing holds, but in the end he succumbed to the Greek's great endurance.

It was the fifth meeting between this pair in five years and their first in New York. The match was bitterly contested and vicious in spots. There was no trick wrestling.

A crowd of 12,000 paid $21,000 to see the mill, a Christmas Fund affair. If a decision had been rendered at the end of an hour there was no doubt that Shikat would have received it because he was the aggressor, but he weakened in the last ten minutes, just long enough for Londos to come from behind to win the bout and to retain his laurels.

Five minutes before the finish, the Greek spilled his adversary with a crotch hold and slam. Shikat came up groggy and Londos quickly put him down three times with flying mares.

Shikat rallied and Londos then rode the old mare twice himself. The German, who had been cuffed and elbowed plenty during Jim's last attack, was trying for another head hold when London picked him up with a crotch hold and cast him violently to the mat.

He then took a double arm hold and in a few seconds pinned both of the brawny Teuton's shoulders.

Londos weighed 201 pounds and Shikat 218.

They were on their feet for the first five minutes, and then Shikat got behind the champion and was the aggressor for the next ten minutes.

Londos tried his famous Japanese armlock, but the German quickly broke it twice, also a head hold that Jim maintained for thirty seconds.

Shikat took a leg and arm scissors and Londos did not get free for nearly a minute. Both indulged in some painful toe twisting, and after they had gone thirty minutes Shikat caught the Greek in a leg spread. For more than a minute Londos struggled, and finally wriggled to the ropes to automatically free himself.



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Shikat was using his heavier bulk and superior power to good advantage. Londos was trapped by a head scissors and toe hold and moaned with pain but would not surrender. From this hold Shikat slipped into a double hold and the Garden reverberated to cries of "Row, Row," as Dick swayed back and forth with the spectators chanting in unison.

They were just starting the second hour, with Shikat apparently much the fresher, when Londos, with a sudden burst of energy, seized the bigger man and tossed him three times with flying mares. On a fourth attempt Shikat jumped him, and they crashed to the floor with Londos caught in a body scissors. Shortly after this Shikat appeared to be weakening. He did not break the Greek's armlocks so quickly. Londos then took the offensive.

Shikat struggled for a minute to break a dangerous double arm hold. His shoulders were close to the floor several times, and Londos tried to claim he was down, but Referee Bothner could not see it that way.

With that match over, Londos engaged in what undoubtedly was his greatest—that with Strangler Lewis in Chicago. It was a bout that set history in American wrestling circles. It took place at Wrigley Field, on September 20, 1934, and surpassed in attendance the great bout between Hackenschmidt and Gotch at Comiskey Park on Labor Day, 1911, in gate receipts and as a contest.

Gotch and Hackenschmidt met before 25,000 spectators, compared to 35,265; gate receipts were $86,000, with $7,000 additional revenue from a tobacco advertising sign within the park, compared to the $96,302 for the Lewis-Londos affair.

There was never at anytime any doubt as to the sincerity of the contestants, who had until 1924 met 14 times, with Lewis' headlock always too much for the little Greek, who at that time never weighed more than 172 pounds. Londos' long fight to gain weight was proven when he scaled 205 pounds against Lewis' regular 240.

Fans and experts alike paid tribute to the Greek's courage against the weight handicap of 35 pounds and his strategy during the early portion of the match, when that handicap told on him at least four times. He was caught in the vise of Lewis' headlock three times, breaking out of one of them in the center of the ring, and two others along the ropes.

It was an armlock applied by the Strangler, however, which nearly caused Jim's downfall. He admitted as much later, and Lewis said that he himself was sure he had the champion at that point.

The real break of the match occurred when the two wrestlers and Referee Ted Tonneman went over the ropes after 40 minutes had elapsed. Lewis twisted his right arm at the elbow in attempting to

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free himself from the top and middle ropes. The arm was numb and sore, according to Lewis, from there until the finish.

Londos, noting this weakness, took advantage of it, and it was on this member that he finally secured the hammerlock which won for him. Another decisive factor was Londos' ability to lift Lewis, a feat which preceded the application of the finishing grip. A few days before the match, Lou Talaber, Lewis' trainer, said that if Jim could lift the Strangler, an act he regarded as virtually impossible, he might win the match. Londos did both.

At the end of forty minutes, Lewis was leading in the point scoring of Referee Tonneman and the two judges, George T. Donoghue and Capt. Willard Malone, who would have assisted Tonneman in rendering a decision had the match gone the full 90 minute limit. In Chicago wrestling is scored on a point system.

Each scored ten points for the ten minute period. For the four full periods, Tonneman gave Lewis 24 points and Londos 16; Donoghue awarded the Strangler 21 points against Londos' 19, and Capt. Malone gave Londos 21 points to Lewis' 19. This gave the Strangler a total of 64 points against Londos' 56 going into the fifth ten minute period.

It was 18 minutes before Lewis took Londos to the floor, the first time either had been off his feet. But in that time the cautious retreat and defense of the catlike Londos, the aggressive, persistent bulling of Lewis kept the thousands on edge.

Here was power. Here was intense effort. Each given the opportunity, was capable of twisting the other into a spasm of agony.

Gradually, almost imperceptibly, Londos moved in to attack. In his very eagerness, however, he nearly lost his title.

Twice Londos swept in against Lewis and sought a crotch hold, but Lewis' proximity to the ropes kept him from danger. Then suddenly as the men sparred for an opening in mid-ring, Lewis flapped his hairy arm around Jim's head and leveraged him to the floor. The crowd boomed in approval. It was typical of Lewis, the same Lewis who far a generation had reigned as king of all wrestlers.

For a minute and a half Londos groveled on the floor, impotent in the grasp. Then he twisted free.

At the end of thirty minutes, the men lost patience. That was the only time that either intentionally used a fighter's tactics. Londos butted Lewis' face to beefy red and drew severe admonitions from Referee Ted Tonneman. Lewis retaliated with forearm smashes to the head.

The tempo increased. Lewis applied another headlock, but Londos tangled in the ropes, forced the referee to order Lewis to break. At 40 minutes Londos fell to the floor when Lewis obtained a wristlock. Unable to leave the center of the mat, he suffered for three minutes



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and bridged repeatedly to prevent the Strangler from scoring a victory.

Londos came to his feet, his right arm numb from pressure. Lewis apparently had no difficulty in gaining his favorite hold, the headlock. Jim broke it, but Lewis renewed the grip.

Then—almost, it seemed, in desperation—Londos rushed Lewis to the ropes and both fell clutching at the edge of the mat with the referee futilely striving to separate them. Londos regained his feet, but Lewis did not jerk free of the entangling ropes and climb back until the timekeeper had tolled eighteen of the twenty seconds permitted.

Londos now was in far better condition. His smooth flowing muscles rippled as he moved forward to meet Lewis. The Strangler was caught in a hip lock and thrown heavily, the first time he had been tossed in what is ordinarily one of the routine holds in wrestling. Again Lewis fell, and this time Londos secured a hammer lock.

As Lewis lay inert, Londos held the hammer lock and switched his left arm to a half nelson. Gradually he forced Lewis over as the referee lay prone watching for the "touch."

Once the referee raised his hand, but withdrew it. Again, as Lewis was forced over, he counted the required three seconds, then slapped Londos on the back, and Londos was the winner.

Thus Jim Londos attained the goal of his ambition—a victory over his arch-enemy. The man who had tossed him fourteen times when the Greek was only a light heavyweight and had used those triumphs to belittle the prowess of Londos after Jim had won the title and had broken from the camp to which Lewis belonged, had finally been vanquished.



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Chapter XXXIV

# O'Mahony, Champion

IN 1935, the mat moguls of the "Eastern Wheel," came to the realization that the wrestling game, as regards box office returns, was beginning to slip—that the end for them as big leaguers was in sight.

Ed Don George, the champion of New England, and Jimmy Londos, the Greek claimant of the title, both skilled wrestlers, had ceased to be big cards except when in there facing the possibility of defeat. Gus Sonnenberg, whose advent in the game in 1929 had given it a tremendous impetus, was on the way out. The various ex-collegians attracted into the sport by the fame of the "Dynamiter," had not come along far enough to be top-notchers, and the be-whiskered freaks, funny men and visiting foreign champions and near-champions, were fraying on the edges.

Of the various headline promoters of the mat business, while the majority felt the effects of the depression, probably none more keenly realized the drab future ahead than Paul Bowser of Boston—ex-wrestler, live-wire showman and keen business man at all times. Something had to be done, and that quickly—a new star who could fill the bill as a wrestler and, at the same time have a personal appeal, was absolutely necessary.

There were numerous councils and consultations of the mat barons, Bowser contending on each occasion that what the game needed was a real honest-to-goodness Irishman—a "Harp" from the ould sod—some big, worthy boy whose physical assets, mat ability and possibility, also nationality, would appeal to many here in America. The day came when it was put up to Bowser to find such a man, and Paul, tied up with his own business affairs, deputized Jack McGrath of Worcester, his pal and friend for many years, to scour Ireland for the man.

To McGrath, Dr. Patrick O'Callaghan of Dublin seemed to be the man and the message from America was carried to him. But the doctor, while filling many of the requirements and in the forefront as the winner of the hammer event in the 1928 Olympiad, was neither a wrestler nor keen for the adventure in this country. However, he pointed out to McGrath a young man, then a private in the Irish Free State army, whom he thought would fill the bill—Daniel A. O'Mahony, a native of Ballydehob, County Cork, a big, clean, fine, unspoiled boy as many thousands of American mat fans now realize.

"Danno," as he now is known, had some experience as a wrestler, boxer, weights man and general athlete, and listened to McGrath's




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proposition. It interested him—he would go through. His release from the Irish Army was secured. The next move was a real trying out of his mat possibilities from the American angle of such. "Danno" made his first "pro" debut last December at the Stadium Club, London, a spot where years before Carpentier and Joe Beckett had fought, with Ed Lewis in there to give him the once over.

This contest was to have gone four five-minute rounds—a custom on occasions in England, but the skilled, experienced Lewis, with years and years of wrestling background, was far and away too much for O'Mahony. The Irish boy, undoubtedly much awed by his surroundings and the presence of the veteran grappler in front of him, never had a chance. After stumbling through the first round, he was easily pinned by Big Ed in the third minute of the second.

Seemingly, that was the end—McGrath would be forced to resume his quest. In reality, however, it was but the real beginning. Though O'Mahony had been whipped and humiliated, in his brief encounter with Lewis he had displayed courage, strength and willingness—future mat possibilities. The great adventure for O'Mahony was on—the confused "news" despatches to this side of the pond gave the impression that the Irish boy had more than held his own and on December 14, McGrath, with what has proved to be the answer to a showman's prayer, arrived in New York.

Though somewhat upset by the winter passage and the immenseness of the Big City, O'Mahony had little time in which to look about or ponder over his new situation. He was whisked to Boston by plane, his first air ride, put to bed in one of Boston's leading hotels—another new experience for "Danno" and, next day, after a tryout and the once over by Bowser and other mat lights, was formally signed to a five-year contract with McGrath his acting manager.

Confused by America's hustle and bustle, the unexpected adoration of the hordes of those of Irish blood who milled about him—his real introduction to the wrestling tactics that prevail on this side of the water, for several weeks O'Mahony was one lonesome, homesick boy. But, he had the stuff in him—the "it" and wonderful athletic possibilities which have made him, at 22 years old, one of the world's foremost matmen today.

Came the December night when the tall, rosy-cheeked lad saw his first contest in this country—a fray at the Boston Garden in which Champion George settled Len Macaluso—the introduction of "Danno" to the Hub's followers of the sport. The Celt left the place in a daze, but still game, and next day, and for days after, was put through the paces by Freddy Moran and other veteran wrestlers—taught the sport from the ground up.

The boy, having a particular hold of his own, the so-called "Irish Whip," but in reality a near-flying mare, he was encouraged by his

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trainers to develop it to its uttermost. This lock, backed by speed and the boy's natural tremendous strength, has accounted for the majority of his unbroken string of victories.

O'Mahony made his American debut the night of January 4, at the Boston Garden, his opponent being Ernie Dusek of the rough and tumble clan from Omaha, Neb. It did not start off any too auspiciously for the visitor from Erin—the vastness of the arena, the huge throng of spectators which nearly filled the place and the stories which he had heard concerning the rough and ready tactics of his opponent, all having their effect upon him. For a while, it looked as though the Irish Army had lost a good soldier, and the mat game had gained merely another wrestler.

Then "Danno," encouraged by his corner men and the thousands of his well-wishers about the ropes, came to himself and snapped out of it. Loth at first to use elbows or fists, mat stuff all new to him, Daniel finally sailed in and, during a melee, caught Ernie by the right wrist and executed the "whip." It was a surprise package for Dusek —landed him with a crash to the canvas, both shoulders down. The time was 10:17.

In the second heat, O'Mahony looked much better. He got hold of himself and carried the battle to his foe. Again the "whip" settled Ernie, this time in 16:50.

But that victory, the Irish boy's initial triumph in America, was not altogether what made him. Rather, it was the immediate aftermath. No sooner had Dusek been pinned for the second fall and win, and while the spectators, fully 14,000 in number were cheering and acclaiming the victor, than Rudy Dusek, corner man for his brother, rushed into the ring and attempted to assault the Irishman.

Seeing him coming, the Celt, not really knowing exactly what to do, did just what the average chap, particularly one of Celtic blood, would do under the circumstances. Backing into a corner, he doubled up his fists and let them go.

In the general confusion and hardly knowing friend from foe, "Danno" not only biffed Rudy and Ernie, but winged Sam Smith, the referee, who was trying to fill the role of peacemaker. Jack McGrath, the boy's manager, finally pinned Rudy; police, seconds and ushers ended what had developed into a general melee. As for the lanky Irish lad who, until quiet had been restored, had been punching right and left—slamming whoever came near him—he was made. He could and would fight in a jam.

Other contests in Boston and elsewhere followed for O'Mahony, a long string of 55 which is not our purpose to go into. It is sufficient that he won them all, mostly in jig time without a fall being registered against him. His greatest victory came when close to 30,000 fans saw him flatten Jimmy Londos, the Greek star, with a flying body



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scissors in 1:16:05 at Fenway Park, Boston, in 1935, thereby acquiring the Helene's various titular claims.

O'Mahony is six feet 1½ inches in height and weighs 218 pounds.

In his six months in this country, Danno won 54 straight bouts, with his famous Irish whip doing most of the damage, but in his last bout, this weapon was nothing more than a threat that came in handy in the last wild moments.

In his tilt with Londos in which he won the world crown, O'Mahony showed real wrestling skill. In fact, he surprised those who hitherto had ridiculed him.

For more than an hour Danno tossed the veteran all over the ring with a neat repertoire of orthodox wrestling holds, and on occasions, he absorbed brief punishment to show that the Londos strength meant nothing to him.

The spine-tingling end that sent the pro-Irish crowd in ecstasies, was the climax of five minutes of super-speed in which the tide turned twice after Londos had taken the offensive with a series of flying mares.

Close to 30,000 mat enthusiasts saw youth again served, the greater strength, height, reach and weight of Danno, carrying him along to shatter the years of experience of one of the world's foremost matmen. In the windup, Danno, after confusing his foe with a barrage of fists, tried his whip. It failed to work exactly as he had intended but, as Londos slipped loose, the force hurled him into the ropes. As he came out on the rebound, Danno, waiting for him, met his rush with a flying mare and then repeated the process when Londos staggered to his feet.

Twice more this happened, but after whipping Londos into the ropes for the fourth time, Danno launching a flying body scissors, weighed the Greek to the canvas and straddled him for the victory.

The Londos defeat was the first Jimmy had suffered in six years, discounting the disputed one-fall loss to Joe Savoldi 2 years previously, and whatever title claims he had, went into the ring with him that night.

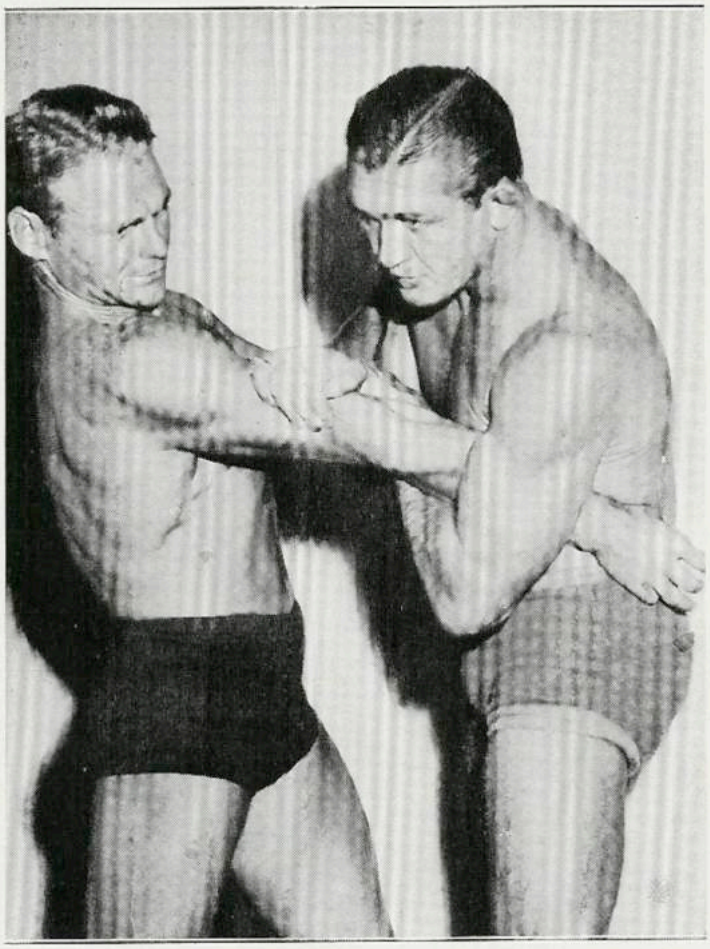
Going out of the raised square, Londos had only the past with him while the admired Irishman was wearing a new set of laurels.

The crowd, slightly smaller than that which saw Londos and Ed Don George wrestle for three hours and two minutes the previous summer, swarmed into the aisles and around the ring to form a solid block around the overjoyed Irish youngster, who danced and waved his appreciation from the center of the mob.

It took Danno a quarter of an hour to reach his dressing room under the stands and he fought his way through another huge mob on his way to hold court in a downtown hotel room.

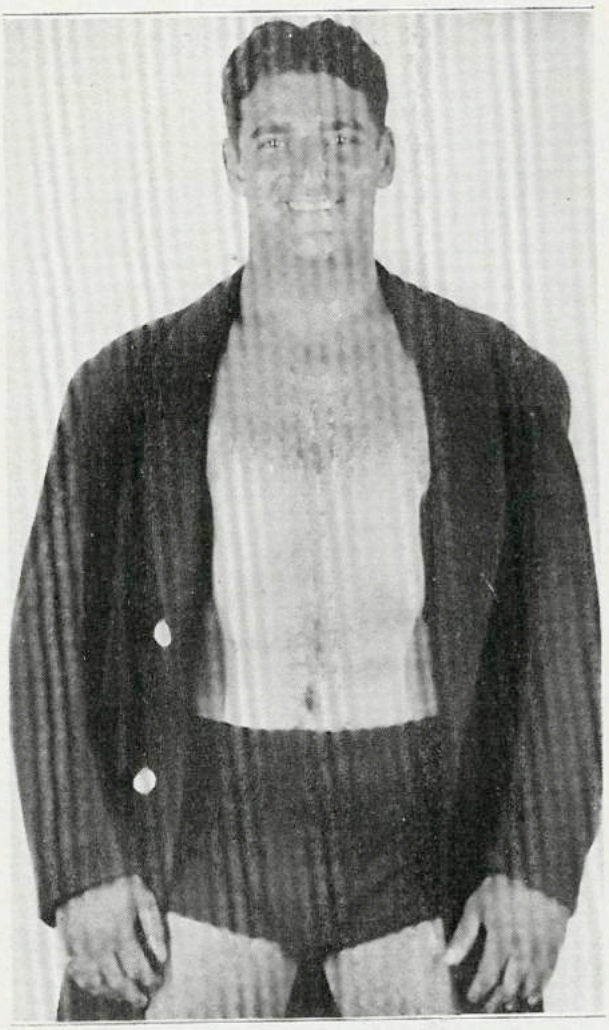
Ted Tonneman was the referee.

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Jack Lutz (left) being taught some wrestling tricks by his brother, Nick, a famous heavyweight.


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Sammy Stein of New York, former football star who made good in wrestling. He became partially blind and was forced to retire.

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O'Mahony, securing a bodylock from behind, brought Londos to the canvas for the first time, about the 10-minute period, they mauling and wrestling all over the ring. Jimmy tried for a chancery over shoulder, and after a dozen tries, finally secured it. However, they piled into the ropes and were brought back to the center of the ring again.

At 9:30, just as a few drops of rain were beginning to fall, Danno secured a wristlock, brought the Greek to the carpet with a crash and, following up with a head scissors, nearly pinned his foe for a fall. The Greek put up a fight to escape, but the Irish man's scissors remained put and it was a good three minutes before the hold was broken.

As Jimmy came out, he tried for a headlock, but failed to make the connection, the fans cheering Danno. Londos, following up, gained a wristlock and arm bar and toppled the Irish boy. He lost his advantage, however, when he put his arm across the Celt's throat, Referee Tonneman ruling a strangle and separating them.

After tossing a body lock from behind, Jimmy put his fist to jaw, but, on trying it again, lost his wrist to the Irish boy, who, putting on a lock with a bar, floored the titular claimant. After a maul, Londos came up under the hold, but was downed almost immediately. Jim tried for a head scissors, but it failed to work. However, the Greek cleared, secured a hammer and, while holding with one hand, biffed Danno a few with the other, also used knee to body, all of which aroused plenty of booing.

Coming out of it, both tried some fistic stuff, but were interrupted by the referee. Then Londos clamped on a headlock and, on tossing it, tried a second. Losing this also, the Greek came with a combination head and hip and, after considerable pulling and hauling and groaning, put Danno down. Again, however, the ropes spoiled the tactic.

Danno missed with a right for jaw, but took two himself when in close. As the Celt worked in on his man, Jimmy butted to face. There was a tangle which ended in the hempen ring boundaries. Jimmy worked a couple of cart-wheels and a chancery over shoulder, but, on following up, was caught in a body scissors—a squeezing process with plenty of juice behind it.

Londos pulled a feat when he finally worked up under the hold but, failing to free himself, was again brought to the canvas, the Irishman retaining the lock. Another struggle and Londos, partly turning, gained a headlock from in front, but again the pair became tangled up in the ropes and were brought back.

Out in the center at 40 minutes, Londos dipped for a leg and, getting it, clamped on a toehold. "I am going to break your foot," he announced. Jim twisted, and the groans from Danno were heard. He



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was in a mighty tough spot. They got in the ropes and the referee ordered Londos to break the hold, but Jim gave Danno an extra twitch before doing so.

At it again, the Celt got a double leg lock which he shifted to a double toe hold, but the Greek, working to the ropes, escaped.

Then came some more fistic and elbow work, Londos the aggressor. In a mix, Danno worked a spread, a bad one for Jimmy because of his short legs. "Fifty minutes," was tolled by the timekeeper while they were on the floor, Danno working on a toe to which he had shifted. Coming out of it, the Irish lad secured a leg lock and tried for an upright shoulder pin, but, as usual, it all ended in the ropes.

Here Danno shot home two to head with his fist and was ordered to stop it. Londos, rushing in, worked two successive lifts and slams, but failed to set the champ from Erin. Danno's next offensive was a head lock which the Greek broke. The Greek replied in kind but, as they went down, Danno clamped on a cradle. As the fray went into the one hour period, now calling for but one fall to settle it, Londos, working out of the cradle, secured a fine toe-hold and from which Danno finally was freed in a mix-up against the ropes.

Both in the center, Jimmy went for the toe and again secured it, but they toppled into the ropes at the corner, and the Greek was forced to let his man up. Then Danno put three elbow shots to the jaw but the Greek, getting in behind, secured a body lock and brought the big boy to the carpet.

There Jim shifted to a body scissors and wristlock and handed out plenty of punishment. But Jim, letting one of his feet stray too near Danno's head, was caught with a toe hold.

At 65 minutes, Londos, in attempting to break, put two elbows to the chin. They got into the ropes. Out once more, Danno secured a full Nelson and had the Greek on the floor, but then came a roll in the ropes and the hold was broken.

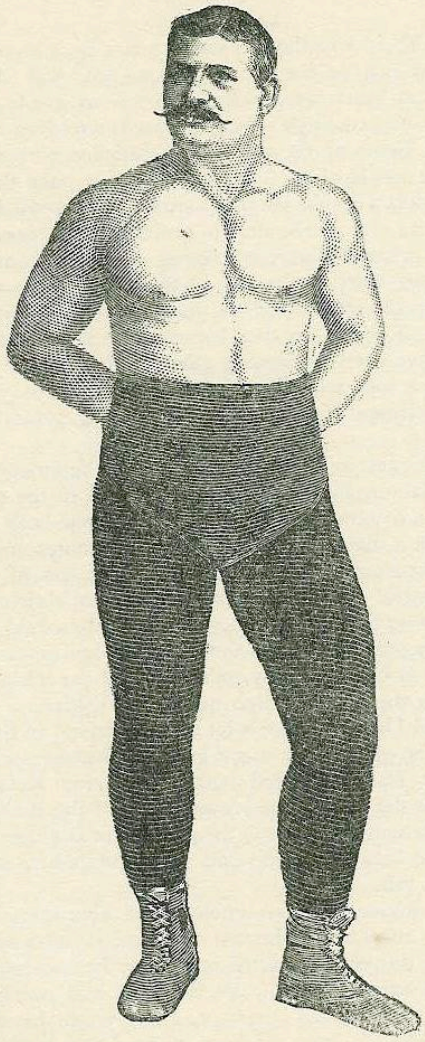
Out in the center, fists and elbows began to connect with heads, with Jim dipping for a leg and converting it into a spread. The ropes saved Danno that time. In the middle of the ring Jim broke out of a head lock, and next shot his fist to midriff and, of course, was whacked back.

In a mix they went to the floor, Danno securing a body scissors. Partly twisting free, the Greek gave Danno an elbow to jaw and there was a merry exchange. Then they got back to wrestling, Danno retaining his scissors from which the Greek freed himself.

At 10:15, Danno tried his whip and missed, and Londos gave him two lifts and slams. Danno, on coming up, biffed to jaw, and following up, knocked the Greek through the ropes. Securing the whip, Danno slung the Greek into the ropes and, as Jim came dashing back, the Irish boy caught him about the waist with a flying scissors and

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toppled his man, pinning Londos for the one and deciding fall in 1:16:50.



**Ernest Roeber as he looked at the time that he wrestled Youssouf in New York.**



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Chapter XXXV

# Shikat Downs O'Mahony

SURPRISES in wrestling in recent years have been many. The suspicions cast on the game by those who had the interest of the sport at heart, were well founded if we are to judge by the series of "double-crossings" that featured wrestling in the early part of 1936. Some of the matmen, dissatisfied with the deal they received at the hands of the "trust," decided to take things in their own hands, and as a result, the promoters who controlled the army of pachyderms were ever on the alert to protect their interests.

The various promoters were suspicious of each other and the wrestlers in turn, were wary of the men at the helm. Each was trying to put one over on the other and thus the sport fell into disrepute. Attendances fell off. The matches became inferior. Cries of "fake," rent the air when even the leading talent performed. Thus the year 1936 goes down into wrestling history as one of the worst for the sport, with a change of "championship" taking place almost every other week.

One of the biggest surprises at the start of the indoor season, was defeat of O'Mahony by Dick Shikat, as it was in the cards for the young Irishman to retain his crown until the come-back of Jim Londas. Shikat, in a match that lasted only 18 minutes and 57 seconds in Madison Square Garden, forced the young son of Erin to cry quits. The general line of talk following Shikat's victory, was that Dick had a falling out with the moguls and had crossed all hands by refusing to play second fiddle to the champion and set about to prove his superiority to O'Mahony by unleashing all the tricks at his command, much to the consternation of the titleholder.

Shikat forced Danno to take a lot of punishment in the short time they were on the mat, and it was a gruelling hammerlock that ended the fray when Danno pleaded with the veteran Referee, George Bothner, to halt the bout. The brazen effort of the Boston flock that controlled O'Mahony, to prove to the public that Bothner had no right to halt the bout because Danno had not requested it, may be taken with a grain of salt.

Bothner, a referee with an unblemished character, a man who knows probably more about the mat sport and its intricacies than any other person in this country, acted only when he was requested to do so. I watched every move of the wrestlers and watched Bothner, also, and as a disinterested spectator, I can vouch for the fact that O'Mahony pleaded to have the bout stopped and thus lost his title without question. It was just another move on the part of the sec-

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tional promoters to muddle the wrestling situation again but it didn't work.

Dick was the new champion. Danno had lost his crown after a severe shellacking. As a matter of fact, Danno, in his interview with the scribes following the loss, praised Shikat and said that he hoped he could obtain a return bout with the new title holder. That didn't indicate that there was any doubt in Danno's mind or that of McGrath as to who was then the wearer of the crown.

The trouble with O'Mahony was that he had engaged in too many tough matches. His bout with Robert, in Boston, was a stirring affair with plenty of hard knocks received by both and as that had taken place only two nights before the Shikat struggle, it left Danno still in a weakened condition.

But as one who has seen all of the wrestlers of note in action over a stretch of thirty years, I feel that I can say that Danno was one of the poorest of modern wrestling champions. He knew so little that in my humble opinion, with the hopes that our army of Irish readers won't take any offense at this candid statement, I think I could name at least a dozen top notch wrestlers right now who could pin Danno to the mat if they were not forced to play second fiddle to him.

Of all the recent champions, Shikat rated among the best. Shikat was in a class with Ed Lewis, Stan Zbyszko and Londos as a wrestler and that is saying considerable. Danno is a splendidly built athlete and a credit to the Irish race, but as a wrestler, he still has plenty to learn. What happened in the Garden, could have happened many times during the year if the handcuffs had been unlocked on most of O'Mahony's opponents.

In the Garden affair, Shikat took the aggressive from the start. At no time during the short bout was he in any danger. In fact, on several occasions, the ease with which he got out of Danno's holds, indicated a tough night for the Son of Erin. The affair was less than a minute old when Shikat dropped Danno with a wrist lock, but O'Mahony crawled out of it. Then came a headlock which had Danno in agony but he got loose of that also by rolling under the ropes. Danno caught Shikat with a wrist lock that for a time seemed to have Dick in agony, but a flying mare put Danno on his back and quick as a flash, Shikat applied a headlock. This was followed by a Japanese arm-lock and when Danno released himself, he found himself back in the clutches of Dick with a hammerlock and from that, Shikat switched to a leg lock.

Thus it went, with Shikat going from one hold to another and Danno unable to fathom the audacity of his rival. O'Mahony walked into a double wrist lock and then another headlock before ten minutes of their wrestling time had elapsed.

Shikat maneuvered Danno into the center of the ring and then with



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a sudden twist, he sent the Irishman to the mat. He clamped on a body scissors, but Danno sought refuge under the ropes and got away with it. While creeping along the mat, he suffered intense agony as Shikat applied a grueling toe hold and when Referee Bothner ordered the men to the center of the ring after Danno had gotten under the ropes, Shikat, aggressive, sprang at his opponent and secured the dreaded hammerlock. He applied it viciously. The more Danno tried to break out of it, the more pressure the German put on, and at the same time, he kept appealing to Bothner to ask Danno to quit before his arm would be broken.

Bothner, who from experience realized the danger, bent twice and asked Danno if he wanted to quit. The Irishman replied in the affirmative, but still George wouldn't stop the bout. He knew that a title was at stake and decided to make doubly certain before halting the mill.

Again Bothner got to his knees and asked Danno in a voice loud enough for all at the ringside to hear:

"Do you want to quit?"

"Yes, he's killing me," moaned Danno. "Stop it, I tell you."

Then Bothner slapped Shikat on the back and raised his hand, the winner and new champion.

In explaining to the scribes what had happened, this is what Bothner said:

"I wanted to make sure that I had heard right. I asked him several times if he wanted to quit and he said yes, but I wouldn't stop it, to give him a chance to break away. He finally pleaded to have the bout halted. He said that Shikat was killing him and I should stop it, which I did."

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Chapter XXXVI

# Title Passes to Ali Baba

THE second reign of Shikat as king of the pachyderms, was a very short one. The German, having deserted the "trust" following his quick victory over O'Mahony, joined the rival forces and agreed to defend his crown against Ali Baba, a former U. S. gob, in Detroit, about a month after Dick had become champion for the second time. The week of the match, Shikat was faced with a law suit in Columbus, Ohio, for having jumped his contract, and during the Federal Court hearing, the sport's dirty linen was thoroughly washed. Charges which were substantiated, were made in court to the effect that most of the big matches, and all of the championship bouts, were fixed affairs, with the challenger chosen by the promoters and the champion assured of victory.

Of course, the court proceedings didn't benefit Shikat any more than it did the "trust" because Dick, unable to train, faced Ali Baba "cold" and paid the penalty. He not only lost the match at the Olympia Sports Arena, but received injuries that sent him to the hospital.

Ali Baba became the new champion when this fierce-visaged Turk tossed Shikat in 46 minutes and 40 seconds. Ali Baba, weighing 201 pounds to his adversary's 228, threw Shikat from the ring a few moments before the fall and Dick got back at the count of nine only to fall victim to a body press. A gathering of 8,562 persons saw the match and paid $7,405.93 to see the title change hands.

During the earlier minutes of the bout things looked bad for Ali. Shikat gouged his eyes, pulled his stringy black mustache and otherwise booted the swarthy Turk around the ring.

But Ali in a sudden temper picked the German titleholder off the mat and dumped him over the ropes to the concrete floor.

Shikat crawled back into the ring, groggy from his tumble.

Ali pounced on him, and once more the conqueror of Danno O'Mahony was spilled to the cement.

Shikat made his way back in the ring at the count of nine, his back covered with peanut shucks, and his eyes bleary from the pummeling received at the hands of the Turk.

This was all Ali needed. He slammed Shikat to the mat, and the powerful German stayed there. Three slaps on the back, and the title was Ali's.

As Arseen Ekizian he served six years in the United States Navy and won the Navy Middleweight, light-heavy and heavyweight wrestling titles.

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Only 5 feet 6 inches in height, the smallest heavyweight wrestling champion this country has ever known, he weighs 205 pounds with every ounce of it solid muscle. He has no fat and his shoulders look like those of Atlas who supposedly carried the world on his shoulders. There you have a rough sketch of part of the physical make-up of Ali Baba.

His chest, normally, is 51½ inches while expanded, it stretches to 54 inches or two inches more than the chest developments of the great George Hackenschmidt.

Ali Baba served two enlistments in the U. S. Navy. His first enlistment saw him attached to the U. S. S. *Utah* and his second, from which he gained his honorable discharge in 1931, was with the U. S. S. *Lexington*.

During the years spent in the Navy he won the middleweight, light-heavyweight and heavyweight championships of the Fleet as well as the Inter-Fleet championships. Any Gob will tell you that a man has to be pretty tough to do this, especially to win the Inter-Fleet championship where every tough lad who boasts brawn and muscle is entered. And there are plenty of these in the Fleet. If you come from Missouri and doubt the assertion, pick an argument with one of them and see for yourself.

Ali Baba's championship claim was not recognized by the New York Commission which ruled that in view of the fact that such bouts are not permitted in Detroit, Shikat could not have lost his crown. Hence to settle the matter of supremacy, the New York Board ordered that the men be rematched for a New York engagement, and as was expected, Shikat, none too eager to play into the hands of the organization he had crossed, was again defeated by Ali Baba. In this second encouter, Ali Baba again proved his right to the crown by tossing Shikat in Madison Square Garden, this time in 53 minutes and 37 seconds with a crotch hold and body press.

The bout was viciously waged. It started slowly but soon the crowd was treated to some good, lively wrestling. Ali Baba was the aggressor and scored first down with a body hold but Shikat soon squirmed out of it.

Shikat then punished his rival with a bone-crushing hammerlock, which Ali Baba endured for several moments. In retaliation the Armenian applied a painful spreadeagle and followed this with a headlock and a toe hold. In his turn, Shikat gained a spreadeagle on Ali Baba. He stood on the latter's right leg, while he pulled the left high over his head.

Ali Baba tried to twist out of this crushing grip, but with no success, whereupon he proceeded to amaze the spectators with a sensational display of strength. Lying on his side, the Armenian lifted

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his right leg, with Shikat on it, held the German off the floor, then toppled him backward.

Shortly afterward Shikat got another hammerlock, and started forcing Ali Baba to the floor. The Armenian broke the hold and seized Shikat about the body. He slammed him to the floor with terrific force, then leaped upon him and pressed his shoulders to the canvas. Ali Baba weighed 205 and Shikat, 227.

As in the case of Shikat, Ali Baba didn't reign long. He in turn was crossed by Dave Levin, a young New York butcher boy who was maneuvered into a match for the championship. A few weeks after Ali Baba's victory over Shikat, a bout was arranged for the Turk in Newark with Levin, a member of the same "trust," but with Toots Mondt, arch-enemy of the troupe handling the champion, as the real promoter. Toots' plan called for Ali Baba to rough his man to "please" the spectators, and unsuspecting it, the champion fell into the trap and was disqualified for fouling. After the referee had declared that Ali Baba had lost his crown, Mondt smilingly announced the acquisition of Levin to the Mondt-Bowser-Curley camp and thus Mondt broke the backbone of his rivals.

It was the age old story of double-crossing double crossers. Ali Baba protested vigorously that the referee's verdict was unjust and his mentors appealed to the boxing commission for a reversal of the decision that gave Levin the championship in 21 minutes, but all the satisfaction they could get, was a statement by Commissioner Keenan that championship bouts are not allowed in Jersey and therefore the referee could only have disqualified Ali Baba but went beyond bounds by announcing a new titleholder.

Yet the fact remains that when a champion takes a gamble on a meeting with a challenger and loses the bout on a foul, he automatically loses his crown regardless of "native" rules and thus Levin became the youngest wrestling heavyweight king of the world, even though he lacks ability to be classed with other titleholders or even with the leaders of the field at this writing. This was proved when he in turn lost the title to Dean Detton in Philadelphia on September 28, 1936.

Levin, a 23-year-old Jamaica butcher boy, was a last-minute substitution for Hans Schnabel, German claimant to the title. Hans had a bad leg. Dave stepped onto the spot with the nonchalance of a veteran and manhandled Ali Baba from the opening gong. He had no respect for the Kurd, and made him look bad. "Which one is the champion?" the crowd yelled after five minutes.

Baba, who was recognized as champion in most states, but just as a short order cook in others, did not reveal a real hold during the proceedings, except a double toe hold, which annoyed the new champion



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a bit but never had him in danger of having his shoulders pinned to the floor.

Levin opened the proceedings by getting the champ in a punishing leg spread. It took Ali several minutes to extricate himself. After the slippery Kurd wormed his way out of that one, he fell into a punishing back arm lock, but broke it by punching Davie in the stomach.

The Turk had a bullet-like head which was shaved to the bone as if he was ready for an execution which finally was committed as suddenly as it was unexpected. He had no neck to speak of and Dave had a tough time of it when he tried to grab the Turk in a headlock.

During the excitement in the ring, Ali Baba stood around, amazed at the uproar. He made no protest and said nothing. After the official announcement the Kurd retired to his dressing room.

In his quarters he was raving mad. "I didn't foul him," he yelled. "I drop kicked him in the chest and chin. If that is the way they handle this wrestling championship, I don't want nothing to do with it. To hell with it. I'm going home and I don't care what happens.

"They made me beat Dick Shikat twice before they would even give me the title. Now they take it away from me on a foul," said Ali, his mustache twitching.

Baba refused to be silenced and went on yelling about the injustice of it all.

"It's my own fault," he said. "I shouldn't wrestle all these punks, but I give them all a chance and then I get the old double cross. Next time I get into a ring with him I'll show him who is champion of the world, I'll murder him."

Baba, by the way, forgot his accent in the excitement and talked perfectly good English.

Only about two years before winning the title, Dave was a butcher's helper in Jamaica, N. Y. But wrestling is what he liked most and he spent considerable of his spare time in the gymnasium. The wife of the owner of the Jamaica Arena saw him and following her praise of the youngster, Leo Rose, the promoter, decided to break Levin into the mat sport.

Dave competed first as a middleweight and did so well, that he soon was able to give up his job in the butcher shop and he was seen almost nightly in the competition around New York. Only a few months before his bout with Ali Baba he entered the heavyweight ranks. He was born in Jamaica and though advertised as the first Jewish heavyweight wrestling king, he is of pure German descent, without Jewish blood in him.

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Chapter XXXVII

# Marshall Enters Field

FOLLOWING Levin's triumph, things became more and more complicated in the wrestling world. Champion after champion was crowned, so that at one time, in the summer of 1936 there were nine so-called World Champions listed in America in addition to those in other parts of the world. Thus, in New York, there was Dave Levin; in Colorado, Everett Marshall; in Pennsylvania, Dean Detton; in New Jersey, Rudy Dusek; in Massachusetts and Canada, Yvon Roberts; in Texas, Leo Savage; in California, Vincent Lopez; in England, Jack Sherry, and in Argentine, Wladek Zbyszko. This gives our readers an idea of the mess into which the sport has fallen. As we near the end of the year, the field is considerably lessened through the defeats of Lopez by Levin and Levin by Detton.

Prior to his bout with Ali Baba, Everett Marshall had received a gold belt from the Colorado Commission in recognition of his prowess. Marshall's bout with Ali Baba was arranged before the Turk's tussle with Levin, the plan being for Marshall to prove his right to international honors by taking the measure of Ali Baba, a victory conceded to him by practically all critics. Marshall, without doubt, one of the three best wrestlers in the world, unfortunately didn't get the chance to toss Ali Baba before the titleholder was disqualified in New Jersey and thus Marshall's claim to world honors falls short. It was on the night of June 29 that Everett beat Ali Baba in Columbus, Ohio, as was expected and his triumph simply complicated matters by adding to the title claimants.

In his bout with Ali Baba, Marshall gained the falls in 29 minutes and 30 seconds with a body slam and a cross body spin.

The affair started out in grand style and although neither grappler was ever in danger during the first 35 minutes, they stepped around the ring at a lively pace to give the crowd a grand thrill every second of the match.

After a give-and-take battle, Everett looked down at his corner, where Billy Sandow, fiery manager of the former Denver, Colo., grappler was seated.

Billy nodded and gave Everett the "word."

Then the fun began. Everett opened up a savage attack that had Ali on the run. Five or six "bopping" rabbit punches had Ali reeling.




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Sandow motioned for the full-nelson. Everett slipped behind the Karput, Turkey, native and set the hold and the beginning of the end was in sight.

Four times the 209-pound Turk slipped out of the hold. Everett quickly slipped on another—his fifth consecutive neck cracking full-nelson.

Ali's tongue flopped out and he groaned. His eyes rolled and he waved his arms, seeking the ropes.

He found them, but it was the blow that knocked the crown spinning out of the grasp of the New York trust moguls.

When Ali finally grabbed hold of the ropes, he slipped himself under them in order to force the referee to break the hold.

Instead of staying there, Everett Marshall gave him a quick shove and both tumbled from the ring.

Ali fell to the dust of the pitchers' mound below but Marshall managed to remain on his feet.

Ali managed to climb back into the ring as the count neared 10. Marshall rushed out to meet his foe. He clamped on another standing full-nelson, shaking the champion like a puppy would a rag doll, until the sawdust seemed about to fly.

Suddenly he released his hold, slipped under the Turk, raised him high in the air. Then came the crash that shattered the throne of Ali, if, as he still insisted, he possessed one.

It was back in 1922 that a young blond boy and his companion were riding stock saddles on pinto ponies between La Junta, Colorado, and the Marshall ranch, when, in answer to his companion's query, "What you gonna be when you grow up?" Everett replied:

"I'm gonna be a professional rassler."

A few years later, his dream came true, for that same blond lad is the Everett whose contest with Ali Baba we just reviewed.

Of Irish and German extraction, Everett is only 28 years old, married, is six feet and one-half inch tall, weighs two hundred and eighteen pounds when in condition, and lives at Santa Monica, California. There he owns his home and, when not touring the country in wrestling matches, he spends his time swimming and swordfishing. He is wealthy, for, in addition to his home, he possesses a fine fruit-bearing grove of 25 acres.

Until 1930, he had been only a preliminary boy. Then, on January 8, 1930, at the Coliseum of Los Angeles, he gained his first big match, that with Joe Malcewicz. He was a 1 to 10 shot, yet he surprised even his most ardent supporters by planting Joe on his shoulders twice in twenty-nine minutes to win the bout and to gain for himself a position as a top-notch wrestler.

In that match, he used the airplane spin for the first time in his pro career, a wrestling "hold" which, Everett insists, he invented.

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He says that he first tried it as an amateur, then kept secretly practicing it until he perfected it and, when he had the opportunity of trying it out on Malcewicz, he successfully used it and, since then, he has tossed most of his opponents that same way.

Malcewicz, he says, was surprised when he was caught by the left wrist and jerked over Marshall's shoulders. Once over, Everett got his left arm around Joe's legs and, dancing about the ring, spun Joe around until Malcewicz was dazed. It didn't take long thereafter to down him.

Marshall's father, Henry C., has a ranch about six miles out of La Junta, Colorado. Everett was the only child and could ride a horse at the age of four. He could shoot at eight, and at twelve, had rolled up quite a record for a lad by having killed a dozen or more coyotes and many rabbits. He bagged his first deer when only twelve.

Everett graduated from the grammar school and then entered high school, where he was named on the all-Colorado football team of 1926. In 1927, he attended Denver University, and the University of Iowa the following year. There he became quite an athlete. Everett says he studied many books on physical culture and became proficient in many branches of sports.

He enlarged his muscles and strengthened his back and shoulders by climbing ropes forty feet high several times a day, hand-over-hand. He went up and came down the same way—quite a feat. He didn't make the Iowa football team, but did win the intersectional wrestling meet. To his dismay, he beat his college coach in the final. He quit the university the following year because his dad met with financial reverses and it was then that he decided to try his hand at professional wrestling. He practiced his holds on a tame, six-hundred-pound bear he owned and still carries the scars from those combats.

It was in February, 1929, that he became a pro. He was invited to meet Joe Robins, the champion of Kansas, and beat him in two falls in twenty-five minutes. Then he travelled through Colorado, Washington and California, tackling men in preliminary bouts, all booked by Lou Daro, famous Los Angeles promoter.

After his defeat of Malcewicz, he had no difficulty getting good bouts. In April, 1930, he defeated Strangler Lewis, whose deadly headlocks enabled him to gain the first fall, but Everett got the next two for the victory. He lost his first big match to Gus Sonnenberg. He beat Gus in 40 minutes for the first fall but lost the next two on flying tackles. After that, he beat Joe Stecher, Pat McGill and other stars. He later lost a match to Don George. Until he was signed by Billy Sandow, who "broke" with Lewis to become Everett's manager, Marshall was his own manager.



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Chapter XXXVIII

# Dean Detton Upsets Levin

FOR the fourth time within a period of four months, the world heavyweight championship changed hands, when on the night of September 28, 1936, Dean Detton, the 24 year old Mormon matman who hails from Salt Lake City, pinned the shoulders of Dave Levin after two hours, five minutes and fifty-two seconds of wrestling in the Philadelphia Arena. Thus Detton gained the mantle that adorned the shoulders of Levin for less than a quarter of a year.

Levin was forced to yield to Detton after a leglock which crippled the conqueror of Ali Baba and Vincent Lopez, proved too much for him. The finish climaxed one of the greatest wrestling bouts seen in Philadelphia, a city that long has been one of the mat centers of America. There were times when Detton's case looked hopeless, and at other times he looked so superior to Levin that the 9,000 spectators wondered why the match was not brought to a close sooner, but it was not until the lad from Salt Lake City clamped on his favorite hold that the outcome was assured.

Levin, recognized as world champion in most states but not in Pennsylvania, took everything Detton had until Dean put on that toe hold that made Gotch so famous and then Levin had to cry quits. His face contorted with agony, he signalled to Referee Billy Clark that he could stand it no longer.

Detton finished the contest with his left eye half closed. For more than an hour the bout was all that could be desired, and then the dirty work began. Each started to rough the other. When Detton opened with a punching and elbow offensive at the hour and a half mark, Levin willingly met the issue. Then Dean switched to a flying-tackle attack and knocked the Jamaica, N. Y. boy through the ropes onto the concrete. Levin was dazed when he returned to the platform and Detton continued his rough charging.

It was just a few minutes before 1 A.M. when Dave gave up, but practically all the 9,000 fans who saw the match begin were still present at the finish, and most of them were astonished by the result.

The slim chance of witnessing such an upset was not the only thing that held the crowd. The match itself was an absorbingly fascinating duel of holds and counter-holds, so earnestly and skillfully contested that nobody complained about the absence of the customary pyrotechnics.

Levin, despite his brief experience as a professional matman, displayed a surprising assortment of leverage holds, offensive and defen-



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sive. During the first 90 minutes he bent Detton to his will almost every time they came to grips.

Dean looked discouraged enough to quit, for everything he tried seemed to be turned against him. But Dave, weighing only 195 pounds in a profession that abounds in 230-pounders, lacked the strength to put his 202-pound rival down on his back for the count and didn't have anything in his capacious bag of tricks to do it by leverage alone.

At length the butcher boy began to tire. Detton's persistent attack on his left foot and increasingly rough tactics hastened the wearing-down process and soon Levin was barely able to stand.

There was a time, along about the end of the 90 minutes of action, when Levin looked like a certain winner. He had the better of Detton in an exchange of body charging and deathlocks. Both had fallen out of the ring but always it was Levin who came up fresher than the boy from Salt Lake City.

At the end of one hour and a half of very even wrestling, Detton secured and executed four of the deathlocks made famous by Chief Little Wolf. Levin escaped all of them, despite terrific torture and countered with a couple of leg splits that kept Dean in distress for fully ten minutes.

Twice in the closing minutes Detton bumped Levin off the ring and into the front row of chairs, both times throwing the referee out of his way to pile into Dave when the latter was outside the ropes.

When Levin crawled back the second time, he looked all tuckered out. The crowd refused to be taken in by appearances, however. Too often they have seen a wrestler simulate semi-consciousness and then suddenly spring on his opponent with the ferocity of a wild animal and toss him for a fall.

At the end of 2 hours, although the going had been close, it looked like Levin's bout. It was then, however, that Detton seemed to find new strength and with a whirlwind attack, which he concentrated on Levin's legs, eventually succeeded in putting over the leverage that won him the bout and with it recognition of world's heavyweight champion.

Dean Detton is the first Mormon to win world honors in wrestling. The Mormons also boast of a championship in boxing, as Jack Dempsey has Mormon blood in him.

Dean Detton is a genuine member of that faith. He was born in Richmond, Utah. Detton says he owes his mat success to the fact that he religiously follows the tenets of his Church, and is known as the Mormon Flash.

It was during the past winter that Detton won the international championship tourney conducted by Ray Fabiani in Philadelphia and



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sanctioned by the Pennsylvania State Commission after Danno O'Mahony had failed to carry out a contract there to meet Sergei Kalmikoff, the Bearded Russian.

Detton, in order to battle his way to the finals, eliminated such stars as Jim Browning, Sando Szabo, Kalmikoff, Hans Steinke and Hank Barber, the Jewish star.

It was the famous old war-horse, Ed Strangler Lewis, whom Dean had to face in Pennsylvania's championship finals and he tossed him and then, with his victory over Levin, he became the undisputed world title holder.

Detton first attracted attention in the grappling world when he defeated nine stars in the championship tourney held in Los Angeles in the summer of 1935. An injury kept him from continuing. He was looked upon as a sure winner until he met with the accident and it was Vince Lopez who eventually won.

Dean is managed by Joe "Toots" Mondt, who paid $10,000 for Detton's contract after Dean had won the Philly tourney, giving that sum to a group of Salt Lake City business men who had been financing Detton ever since he left college. They didn't want to make any money on the Detton contract as the sum paid them was just what was laid out on him. Their aim was to get advertising for Salt Lake City.

Detton probably has as wide an assortment of holds as anybody in the sport, but he has been most successful with the "toe-hold" and the "airplane spin." It was the toe-hold which carried Frank Gotch to world-fame and the title, and Detton is fast becoming identified with this dangerous weapon.

Dean has been wrestling nine years in all, four of them as an amateur. He weighs around 215 pounds and stands six feet.

Detton was a member of the Ike Armstrong Utah University Football team that went five years once without a defeat.

When Dean made his professional debut, he went to a two-hour draw with Hugh Nichols, then light-heavyweight champion, in Salt Lake City. It was that feat that won financial backing for him and which led to his two trips to Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii for experience.

Detton is proud of the fact that he is a real Mormon. He says both his father and mother are Mormons. His father Joe was a lightweight wrestler and once held the Pacific Coast title. His father's father was English and his father's mother Danish, while both his grandparents on his mother's side were Danish.

It was in 1926—when he had just turned seventeen—he is twenty-seven now—that he entered the University of Utah. He worked his

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way through as a janitor, soda-jerker, counterman and furnaceman. It took him five years before he graduated, largely because of the fact that due to lack of funds he was only able to attend classes part time.

In 1927 he began his mat career as a welterweight, winning all his intercollegiate matches, but losing in the finals of the Inter-Mountain A.A.U. championships.

In 1928 he went undefeated in the middleweight or 156-pound class. In 1929 he won all his bouts in the light-heavyweight class, it being noticed that he was taking on weight all the time.

In 1930 he earned gold medals by capturing the light-heavyweight and heavyweight Inter-Mountain A.A.U. titles, held at Pocatello, Idaho, March 28 and 29 of that year. He captained the wrestling team that year.

It was in 1931 that Dean wrestled his first professional match, but he says it has been only during the past year or so that he really has found himself. He is a colorful wrestler and should make a good champion.





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Chapter XXXIX

# In Conclusion

NO story of American wrestling would be complete, without the story of the thrilling career of one of the greatest matmen of all time, George Bothner. While only a lightweight when in his prime, Bothner takes his place in this history from Milo to Londos, because he fought many sensational bouts with wrestlers of all classes, from lightweights to heavyweights. George's hair is snow white, but watching him move about in the ring as referee in all of New York's important contests, it is difficult to believe that he is the same athlete who won the world title back in the days when William McKinley was president of the United States.

A remarkable physical specimen, he is a great tribute to the sport which he has represented for upwards of fifty years. Weak and anemic as a child, he built himself up into a beautiful specimen of manhood by exercise on the mat; and he still retains the firm, hard muscles of the trained athlete today.

Born in New York City, Bothner rose to wrestling fame after surmounting difficulties that must have been most discouraging at the time. He saw his first wrestling match in 1881 and has been an enthusiast ever since. Bothner had around 400 matches in all.

As a fitting climax, I asked George Bothner to write his own story of his career and this is what he contributed:

It was wrestling night in the Garden. I was assigned by the New York State Boxing Commission to officiate as third man in the ring in the bout between Danno O'Mahony, world champion, and Ed Don George, and as is customary on such occasions, I dropped into Nat Fleischer's museum, for such I call his Garden headquarters, where he has his Ring Book Shop, All America Sports Magazine and his famous Ring Magazine, and in that, I was simply doing what many other sports fans do every fight and wrestling night. There I went just to say hello to a pal, but I found myself in the midst of a gathering that included such celebrities as Bill Brown, State Commissioner; Jack Curley, America's foremost sports promoter; Wilbur Wood, Sports Editor of the New York Sun; Mike Jacobs, the man who brought back the millon dollar gate to boxing; Jimmy Johnston, matchmaker of the Garden; Billy Roche, famous in his prime as America's leading boxing referee and promoter; Ray Fabiani, Philadelphia's sports impresario; Paul Bowser, Boston's leading promoter; Sam Austin, one time editor of the Police Gazette when that sheet was America's most talked-of sports journal; A. D. Phillips, the Grand Old Sports Writer who has passed his



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eighty-fifth birthday and numerous other celebrities, and naturally, with such a gathering, it didn't take long for reminiscences to be the order of the evening.

Bill Brown told some stories of his days at the old Brown's Gymnasium in West Twenty-third Street when he owned the place and I worked for him as a rubber and a trainer; Curley discussed his experiences with world famous pachyderms; Billy Roche spoke of the great Stanley Ketchel and told some interesting stories of his father's experience with John L. Sullivan and Jack McAuliffe with whom his dad was very friendly and who frequently were backed by Dad Roche; Sam Austin told of some big stakes he held and some of the famous bouts in which he acted as referee and when it came my turn, I looked like a piker alongside that mob of story tellers, but I got along o.k. until Nat Fleischer cornered me and said:

"George, we've had enough free speech here tonight. You know I'm getting out a darn good book, 'From Milo to Londos'—and it isn't every one that I'll allow to write for me. How about saving some of those stories for this book? Will you agree to let me have your experiences, some of which you related here tonight and others which you were about to tell when I stopped you? You write 'em, and I'll print 'em as the windup chapter in 'From Milo to Londos'." Well, here goes my story and I hope my readers will enjoy it.

I was born in New York City, and I saw my first wrestling match in 1881 when my brother, Charles, who later became national fencing champion in which I also excel, took me to the old Pastime A. C. to see the match between Lew Channeworth and Johnny O'Brien, and then and there I decided that I would become a wrestler. I went to the New York Turn Verein as a youth, and though my father, who thought I was a frail lad, frowned upon the idea, I trained in secret and I've been training ever since though I have long since passed the fiftieth milestone.

Just when I began to master the sport, I ruptured a blood vessel in my neck as a result of a friendly bout in which my opponent secured a headlock and during the six weeks that I was confined to bed, my parents were more determined than ever to put an end to my wrestling aspirations. But when I was well again, I took up the sport in earnest and after winning over dad, I became one of New York's headliners in the lightweight division.

Wrestling was not as profitable then as it became later, and in order to make some money, like other matmen, I threw in my lot with burlesque shows and did considerable traveling. I accepted a post with Barney Gerard's burlesque troupe and for several years barnstormed over the country, going from place to place, appearing sometimes twice, and on special occasions, three times a day, and



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wrestled catch-as-catch-can, meeting all comers. Any rube or city strong man who wanted to be acommodated could take a chance at me, and although I met men of all sizes and all weights in hundreds of bouts, I lost only two. I was billed between acts and outside the theatre would be a poster displaying a likeness of me and my name, and a barker would shout the news, "George Bothner will appear here today and will offer twenty-five dollars to any man who stays fifteen minutes with him in the mat."

Shad Link tossed me, and I lost to George Schnabel. Shad wrestled me in the Monumental Theater of Baltimore and while the crowd was cheering me because I was giving him an awful shellacking, although he was a heavyweight and I a lightweight, my leg became entangled in a tuft of the mat and as I paused to release it, Link leaped at me, caught me about the waist and swung me around. I tried to break away, but with one foot caught in the mat, I could do nothing and, as I was tossed, my ankle snapped and I was laid up for almost two months, with a broken ankle. Of course, I lost the bout.

Later, in Jersey City, I met a big, beefy butcher boy called George Schnabel. He scaled 220 to my 132, and since he insisted on wrestling Graeco-Roman style instead of catch-as-catch-can, I agreed.

I wanted to end the bout quickly, hence rushed him and Schnabel got a body hold on me. Forbidden to use my legs, I tried to push his chin up, but his neck was set and he gripped me with his immense arms, lifted me from the floor and, hugging me tightly, he almost squeezed the breath out of my lungs.

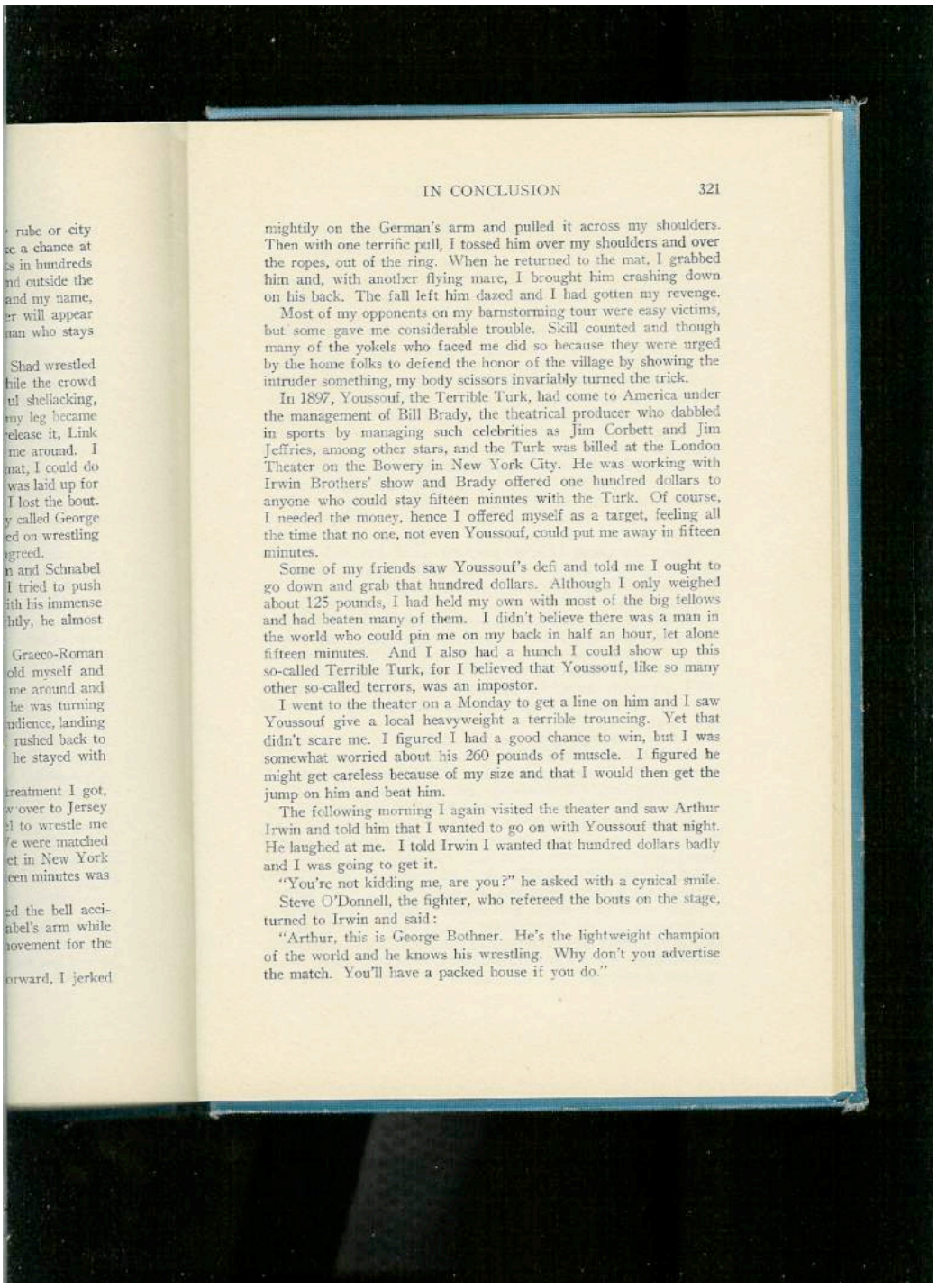
My legs were dangling in the air, and since it was Graeco-Roman style of wrestling, I could not bring them up to hold myself and perhaps to scissors him to the floor. Schnabel spun me around and around, still gripping me about the waist, and when he was turning at terrific speed, he let go of me and I sailed into the audience, landing in the third row. Someone caught me and, unhurt, I rushed back to the stage to try to save my twenty-five dollars, but he stayed with me the limit and I lost the bout, but wasn't pinned.

I was riled at that defeat because of the rough treatment I got, so I waited until my tour was over, then sent a fellow over to Jersey City with the invitation of Bill Brown for Schnabel to wrestle me at his club for a definite purse and he accepted. We were matched to clash at Brown's gym in West Twenty-third Street in New York City, and Arthur de Young was the timekeeper. Fifteen minutes was the limit.

When ten minutes had elapsed, de Young tapped the bell accidentally with his pencil. I drew back, seized Schnabel's arm while facing him and stepped in close. This is the first movement for the flying mare.

Bending from my waist and dropping my head forward, I jerked

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mightily on the German's arm and pulled it across my shoulders. Then with one terrific pull, I tossed him over my shoulders and over the ropes, out of the ring. When he returned to the mat, I grabbed him and, with another flying mare, I brought him crashing down on his back. The fall left him dazed and I had gotten my revenge.

Most of my opponents on my barnstorming tour were easy victims, but some gave me considerable trouble. Skill counted and though many of the yokels who faced me did so because they were urged by the home folks to defend the honor of the village by showing the intruder something, my body scissors invariably turned the trick.

In 1897, Youssouf, the Terrible Turk, had come to America under the management of Bill Brady, the theatrical producer who dabbled in sports by managing such celebrities as Jim Corbett and Jim Jeffries, among other stars, and the Turk was billed at the London Theater on the Bowery in New York City. He was working with Irwin Brothers' show and Brady offered one hundred dollars to anyone who could stay fifteen minutes with the Turk. Of course, I needed the money, hence I offered myself as a target, feeling all the time that no one, not even Youssouf, could put me away in fifteen minutes.

Some of my friends saw Youssouf's defi and told me I ought to go down and grab that hundred dollars. Although I only weighed about 125 pounds, I had held my own with most of the big fellows and had beaten many of them. I didn't believe there was a man in the world who could pin me on my back in half an hour, let alone fifteen minutes. And I also had a hunch I could show up this so-called Terrible Turk, for I believed that Youssouf, like so many other so-called terrors, was an impostor.

I went to the theater on a Monday to get a line on him and I saw Youssouf give a local heavyweight a terrible trouncing. Yet that didn't scare me. I figured I had a good chance to win, but I was somewhat worried about his 260 pounds of muscle. I figured he might get careless because of my size and that I would then get the jump on him and beat him.

The following morning I again visited the theater and saw Arthur Irwin and told him that I wanted to go on with Youssouf that night. He laughed at me. I told Irwin I wanted that hundred dollars badly and I was going to get it.

"You're not kidding me, are you?" he asked with a cynical smile.

Steve O'Donnell, the fighter, who refereed the bouts on the stage, turned to Irwin and said:

"Arthur, this is George Bothner. He's the lightweight champion of the world and he knows his wrestling. Why don't you advertise the match. You'll have a packed house if you do."


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"How can you match a fellow like him with the powerful Turk?" asked Irwin.

O'Donnell argued my case and Irwin said:

"O. K., if you want to be killed, but before I accept you as his opponent, I want you to sign a paper exonerating me and my show from any blame, if you sustain any injuries."

To this I willingly agreed, and so far as Irwin was concerned the match was on.

A few nights later, I went to the London Theater with my lifelong pal, Bill Brown. We went up to the dressing room where, while waiting for Irwin to arrive, I sat on a stool with Brown beside me.

In walked Youssouf. He looked at us, snorted and walked right out again, slamming the door behind him. Twice more he came in and angrily walked out again, and finally he asked the interpreter which of us was Bothner and when the interpreter put the query to Brown and myself, I arose and said, "I am." Then the Turk grew real angry. He thought we were making fun of him and he shook his fist in my face and again walked out, this time almost breaking the door behind him.

"Huh," I chuckled. "The old army game, eh? The Turk is trying to get my goat. Believe me, I'll have his before I finish with him."

But I didn't know Youssouf. I certainly didn't know the Terrible Turk.

Candidly, I don't know of any modern wrestler who was or is as strong as was Youssouf, not excepting Sandow. But I didn't know that at the time I insisted on tackling the Turk. He was a modern Hercules and he knew how to apply his punishing strength, was as quick as a jungle cat and was master of all holds known to American wrestlers, and many of which they knew nothing or had ever heard of or seen work before.

I had wrestled such great men as Jenkins, McLeod, John Pining, Graeco-Roman heavyweight champion, and other stars, but never had I felt myself in the grip of such phenomenal strength as belonged to the Terrible Turk. Youssouf was the only man who ever made me look east while I was walking north. Yes, that's just what I mean —when the Turk was finished with me, I was walking north but looking east. How can one perform such a trick, you might correctly ask.

Funny? Of course it is! You don't understand me? Well I don't blame you, but just listen to this and you'll see how it was done:

When Irwin accepted me as Youssouf's opponent he told me to go home and be back the next day. I was elated. I went out with Bill Brown and it didn't take long before I was at the Pastime Club, where every fellow at the club was asked to be at the London Theater the next day to give me moral support.

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The next day, chuck full of confidence, I went with Bill Brown and my club mates to the London Theater all set for my go. I reported to Irwin, was shown my dressing room and in ten minutes I was ready for the bout.

We went on the stage. There were the usual introductions. My gang from the old Pastime A. C. was there and they yelled their heads off. They had seen other big fellows try to toss me. Like myself, they had thought they knew what was going to happen to the Terrible Turk.

Well, they cleared the mat. Youssouf came at me like a bull. He rushed me right off the mat into a bunch of chorus girls in the wings. The first thing I knew I found myself helpless. The Turk picked me up as if I was a kitten. Never before or since have I felt such terrible strength. Before I could give a wriggle or a squirm he dashed me down on the bare boards with terrific force, knocking all the strength and wits out of me.

They told me after I had landed, Youssouf rolled me over with his foot, looked out over the audience, gave a contemptuous snort and walked off the stage.

When I came to, I was a sadder, but wiser young man.

Somehow or other I got into my clothes, hobbled out into the street and started to walk north up Third Avenue toward my home. But as I walked north, I was looking east, for Youssouf had given my neck such a wrench that he almost tore it from my shoulders. And let me tell you, it was several days before I again could look in the direction I was headed.

I remember another time I was fooled, but only in a different way. It was through my desire to wrestle another Terrible Turk. It wasn't Youssouf, you bet your life. No sir-e-e! Once with Youssouf was enough.

This second Terrible Turk was appearing at Miner's Theater on the Bowery. Sam Liebgold, the walking champion, came to me one Sunday morning at the Pastime A. C. and excitedly told me how Miner's Theater was advertising a Terrible Turk and guaranteeing the usual fifty dollars against all comers who could last five minutes.

Youssouf wasn't in the country then. I knew there wasn't another Turkish wrestler around who was worth a plugged nickel, so I thanked Sam for his tip and called up Tom Miner on the telephone, telling him I was coming down that night and take a fall out of his Terrible Turk. Miner told me to come on, and promptly placarded the building with posters telling how I was going to wrestle the Terrible Turk.

When I reached the theater that night, I went back stage to take a look at the Terrible Turk to see if I knew him. I didn't know him. I noticed he had a false moustache and wig and was all fixed



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up to look wild and ferocious. I wondered who they were ringing in. He was a big, tall fellow, but looked soft as putty, and easy to throw.

He was.

After fiddling around until I found he had nothing and couldn't toss me in a month of Sundays, I stepped in and threw him with a plain waist hold and inside leg and quickly rolled him on his back.

The house went wild.

I quickly donned my clothes. I was in a hurry to get home. So instead of waiting around for Tom Miner to pay me my money, I went right to him and told him to come across, for I was anxious to get home.

"You want money?" queried Tom in apparent surprise. "For what?"

"Why, for tossing this Terrible Turk on his back," I replied. "Come on Tom, give me the fifty as the posters say."

"I guess you didn't read the posters, George," smiled Tom. "Go out and read them."

I went out and took a look at the posters. I read them once and couldn't see why I hadn't earned the fifty dollars. Then I read the poster again, more slowly and carefully.

Then I walked rapidly away, raising my heels and kicking myself soundly at every stride.

This is how the poster read: "Fifty dollars to any man WHO FAILS TO THROW THE TERRIBLE TURK in 15 minutes."

Well, I wasn't the only man who failed to read that trick poster carefully, anyway. All the others read it too hurriedly and tossed the Turk on his back. And the Turk would throw his own self for those who were too slow. Canny Tom Miner was well protected. The wrestler was no Turk at all, just a wrestler masquerading under false colors.

When I beat Tom Riley, I won the world lightweight title, but there was one man, however, Jack Harvey, who disputed my claim and challenged me to a match. Harvey, a lightweight, was known as the Brooklyn Strong Boy and at the time, he was the wrestling instructor at Yale University. I accepted his challenge and we were matched to grapple at the Polo Rink in New Haven.

Before the match I was being interviewed by newspapermen when Harvey came over to me and offered his hand. I extended mine and Harvey tried to crush my knuckles. That made me very angry and I was on the verge of hauling off on him but one look from Bill Brown, and I stepped back.

"What are you trying to do?" I asked.

Harvey replied, "Do you remember the last time we met?"

"Yes," I answered.

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"Well I was easy then, George," continued Harvey, "but tonight you'll get an eyeful. Just keep your peepers on me."

I turned to Bill Brown, my pal, and I said, "Bill, he's pretty cocky, isn't he? I wonder if he's trying to scare me or has he improved so much since I last tackled him?"

"Just trying to get your goat," replied Brown.

We entered the ring that night and after the usual instructions, the gong sounded and off we went. We were out for blood that night, Harvey eager the avenge the previous defeat and I just as eager to show him up because of what he had just done.

It didn't take but a few minutes before I leaped in and obtained a front chancery, gripping Harvey around the neck with my arm. The Brooklyn Strong Boy straightened up quickly and snapped me over his head. I went down with a bang and injured my head.

I was dazed but I wasn't down. Harvey, realizing my position, leaped on me to get the fall. I was in a semi-conscious state when Harvey pressed against my body and suddenly I heard a voice shouting, "bridge, George, bridge."

Instinctively I pushed up on the flat of my feet and the top of my head and there I was bridged with Harvey trying his utmost to force me down.

Within two minutes I had regained my equilibrium, but Harvey, still the aggressor, got a crotch hold and a hammerlock on me and one of my shoulders was touching the canvas. I had not regained full control of my senses and I pushed until I broke away and then I set sail in earnest after Harvey. I obtained a body hold and lifting him high, I slammed him with terrific force against the mat and in a jiffy, I had applied a scissors hold.

"You can't do a thing with me with that hold," said Harvey as he tried to get my nanny and then he started to kid me. Of course he succeeded in getting me quite angry. Bill Brown noticed it all and he kept shouting to me, "give it to him, George," and give it to him, I did. I applied full pressure and soon I had Harvey into a fall. Only seven minutes had elapsed before I got the fall and considering Harvey's ability, I considered that a great stunt.

I gained the second fall and the third was also mine. When we came out for the final fall, Harvey had settled down to real action. I lost no time going after him. I got a body hold on him again and it took me only a short time to win the match. Thereafter Harvey and I became the best of friends. He was and still is a fine wrestler and I'm happy to know that Harvey has just opened a gym of his own. We often josh each other about our tussle.

Just to show how versatile I was, I'll mention my match with the great Tom Jenkins, a heavyweight. Tom at the time when I clashed with him, was the recognized heavyweight king and I, the



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lightweight champion. As Jenkins weighed 201 pounds, our match was a handicap affair in which Tom had agreed to toss me four times in an hour. Tom was a star of the mat world, a wrestler who knew every hold and also knew how to apply the holds scientifically. Despite his weight and knowledge of the game, however, he found it difficult to do much with me. He got many dangerous holds on me, but each time I squirmed out of the tight spot.

After thirty-two minutes of wrestling, he got a half-nelson and leg hold on me and crushed me so that I was pinned. Tom Sharkey, the referee, an ardent wrestling follower, gave the fall to Jenkins, whereupon Billy Elmer, my associate, jumped into the ring and had nerve enough to make a swing for the famed sailor fighter.

"Bothner was not thrown," shouted Elmer at Sharkey.

"He was," replied Tom.

The argument became so hot that the police got into the ring, escorted Elmer out and to the police station, and the match continued. Towards the end of the hour, Jenkins downed me for the second and third time with a wrist lock and a body hold, but he couldn't get the fourth down on me. Tom Sharkey held up my hand at the end of the hour, declaring me the winner as Jenkins had failed to toss me four times.

The next morning Elmer was brought before a magistrate who had been at the bout.

"What's the charge?" asked the judge, while smiling.

"Disorderly conduct," replied the arresting officer.

"What have you got to say for yourself," asked the judge who had witnessed the match.

"I lost my head, Your Honor," replied Billy.

"No you didn't," returned the judge, "but you might have, had Mr. Sharkey unloosened on you when you threatened him. Case dismissed."

Billy admitted after the dismissal, that he was a very lucky chap to have escaped so easily. There is no telling what might have happened, had Sharkey sailed into Elmer.

It was following my long barnstorming tour that I decided to accept an offer from Princeton to act as coach. Later I was offered the post at Yale, but didn't care to quit Princeton. I told them that Ed O'Connell, a good New England wrestler, would be an ideal coach and he was hired. Later he brought his wrestling team to Princeton to tackle my boys, and Coulter Huyler, son of the chocolate king, eager to test the relative merits of the two coaches, decided on a novel idea.

"Can you beat O'Connell?" he asked me.

Then he went to O'Connell and asked Ed if he could beat me.

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Neither of us was sure, but of course we decided to be as neutral as was possible.

That didn't suit Huyler so he decided to put it differently to me. He came to my office and said, Mr. Bothner, do you know that O'Connell says he can lick you. You're not going to let him get away with that, are you?

Of course I was trapped and I went to O'Connell and said:

"Ed, I understand that you say you can beat me. Say the word and we'll have a match."

The match was arranged to take place in New Britain, with Dick Howell of the Bridgeport *Herald* as the referee. That was back in 1903.

On the night of the bout with O'Connell, many college boys from both Yale and Princeton came to see us. We took the referee's hold and each tried for a grip. I feinted for an arm hold and then we both went to the mat. O'Connell got a scissors hold on me and crushed me between his legs. He hurt my ribs, but I kept on wrestling. I twisted his toe and broke the hold, and at the end of eight minutes I had the first fall.

We had agreed upon fifteen minutes rest between falls and I went to my dressing room, and while sitting, for the first time I felt the pain. I looked down and there was one rib sticking out, bulging from the skin.

Naturally I was frightened, not because of the danger, but because I was afraid that my third match with Parker, for which I had put up a forfeit of $1,000, and was scheduled for one week after the O'Connell bout, would be called off.

I called over Bill Brown, my chief-of-staff, and I said:

"Bill, look at my rib. I've busted it and can't go on. What do you say?"

Brown walked out to find the referee to tell him that I had forfeited the match to O'Connell, when a knock at my door was heard. The door was opened and in walked the referee.

"Just came in to tell you that O'Connell says he's had enough," remarked Howell, and when he finished his sentence, you could have knocked me over by looking at me, so surprised was I. I had won the match after all.

My rib was painful and I was upset because I realized that if I could not go on with Parker, I'd be called a quitter by him and would also lose my side bet of one thousand dollars which I had posted. I couldn't train because of the pain, but I simply had to go through with the bout.

About six o'clock on the eve of the battle, Tommy Shortell, my boxing instructor, offered to test me.



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"Get down on the mat, George, he said, "and let's see how you stand it."

I went down and he applied a quarter-nelson, a hold with which there was not much strain on my rib, and pressed on my neck. It hurt me terribly and pushed the rib still further out.

Billy Elmer, who had been looking on, and who was my partner, said: "Let Parker collect the forfeit, George. Wait until that rib is healed and then you'll toss him through the roof."

"Listen, Billy," I replied, "that bird is not going to collect my forfeit, nor is he going to get the chance to ridicule me."

Came the time for us to get to the dressing-room. The preliminary bout were going on. The affair was at Sulzer's Harlem River Casino, and as I sat there, thinking of what was in store for me, there was a knock on the door and in walked Elmer. He had brought with him Clarence Mackey and a Dr. Martin, a friend.

"I brought Dr. Martin with me," said Mr. Mackey, "and I want you to let him look over that rib."

"You can't wrestle tonight," said the medico after the examination.

"Sorry, Dr. Martin," I replied, "I have no intentions of letting Harvey get my thousand dollars forfeit. I'm going on."

"Don't worry, George," said Clarence Mackey, "I'll take care of that for you."

But I was determined. It wasn't the money, it was Harvey Parker that was stirring me up to action.

At last Joe Humphreys, the announcer, called for our bout.

I stepped out to the mat to meet my enemy. I purposely did not bandage my rib so that Parker wouldn't become wise, and as the bell put us on our way, we got the referee's hold and the match was on.

It was a gripping match, one in which we were both tested to the utmost. The pain I suffered that night I never want to experience again. If ever a man's courage was tested, I must say, without bragging, that mine was put to the test that night.

At the end of three hours, neither of us had gained a fall. Referee John O'Brien stopped up for a few moments to make an announcement. It was after one o'clock in the morning and many of the fans, tired, had gone home. "If no fall is obtained by either," he said, "I'll declare this bout a draw."

Harvey, upon the resumption of activities, jumped at me like a wild tiger and tried hard to down me, but I slipped out of the tough spots, and at the end of fifteen minutes the third of our thrillers was an even affair. It was the last I ever had with Parker.

Parker was furious when he found his boast could not be made good. I staggered to my dressing-room and could scarcely move for more than an hour, but otherwise I suffered no ill effects.

The bout was one of the greatest tussles of my career.

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During my hectic career, I engaged in over 400 matches, every one of which was a thriller to me. I scaled only 135 and at most I was scarcely ever over the weight which Jimmy McLarnin scaled for Barney Ross, yet I clashed with some of the world's most renowned matmen: Youssif, the Terrible Turk; Pierre Colosse, Ivan Linow, and others of equal skill in the heavyweight ranks.

Speaking of Linow, I shall digress for a moment to relate how I happened to clash with him. Ivan about the time of the world war, billed as the Russian Lion, was a pretty good grappler but he liked to have people think he was tough. In those days wrestling was not an acrobatic sport—it was real wrestling and fouls were called as such and not permitted to go unnoticed as in these days of entertainment and exhibitions in which we are allowed considerable leeway.

Linow and Dr. Roller were booked as the main attraction at the old Manhattan Opera House and I was selected to referee. During the bout, I warned Linow several times for fouling and he resented it. Finally he became so riled, that he struck me in the face, much to my astonishment, but knowing my place as an official, I took the blow good-naturedly and bided my time.

When the match was over, I went to the dressing room of Ivan and told him that I considered him a phoney and a coward, and though I was then fifty years old and had been retired for many years, I offered to break all of his supposedly vicious holds. We were matched and I trained as I never did before and on the night of the bout, the Manhattan Opera House was jammed to the rafters to see the old man against the Russian Lion. And I made good my boast.

For fifty-two minutes I broke every hold the Russian had on me, until the Russian, peeved beyond words, began to resort to foul tactics and then my friend Dr. Roller, as fine a fellow that ever graced the roped square, standing in the wings awaiting his call for a bout, seeing what was taking place, rushed into the mill and from then on, it was a riot. But I showed the Russian that I could make good my boast and that to me, was enough glory. I then decided that never again would I issue a challenge and that I would remain retired, and to this date, I stuck to that promise.

It was in 1899 that I won the lightweight championship of the world by beating Tom Riley, the champion of England, in three falls. Reilly previously had won the Police Gazette Belt and by winning from him, I brought the belt back to America.

In my many years of affiliation with the wrestling sport and other athletic competition, I have broken ribs so often that I couldn't keep count. I have had both my legs broken and had an arm and my collarbone fractured, yet at this writing, I am hale and hearty and as nimble on my feet today as I was when in my prime—and that



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is not bragging—it is a fact. How do I keep that way? Regular training periods at my gymnasium. I never fail to take at least one good workout a day. Needless to say that although I won the match with Higashi, I suffered more injuries that day than in any other contest I had ever engaged. The interest in that bout was great and therefore I have decided to give it more space than I ordinarily would do. Higashi was somewhat of a psychologist and he tried to put the fear into me but he didn't succeed.

A match that was almost as tough as that with the Jap, and in some ways more grueling, was that with Emil Salva in Helvetia Hall, Paterson, N. J., in 1906. I had met Silva, a giant Italian a few weeks before the show at Helvetia Hall, and the bout resulted in a draw. It was to have been a split match, that is, one fall Graeco-Roman and the second catch-as-catch can and the third, if necessary, Graeco-Roman, but I demanded that we meet in catch-as-catch-can style in which I was more expert and in view of the huge difference in weights, I felt that my claim was justified.

Selva was enraged but he finally gave in and we wrestled from 10.30 in the evening until 2.30 the next morning without either gaining a fall. And what a tough bout that was! Candidly, except for the Higashi bout, I was never so punished in all my career as in the contest with Selva. When the police interceded and stopped the affair, I was all in. I could hardly move. It took me several hours to get back to normal so punished had I been. But Selva knew that he had been in a gruelling match, also, for it took him almost as long to come to.

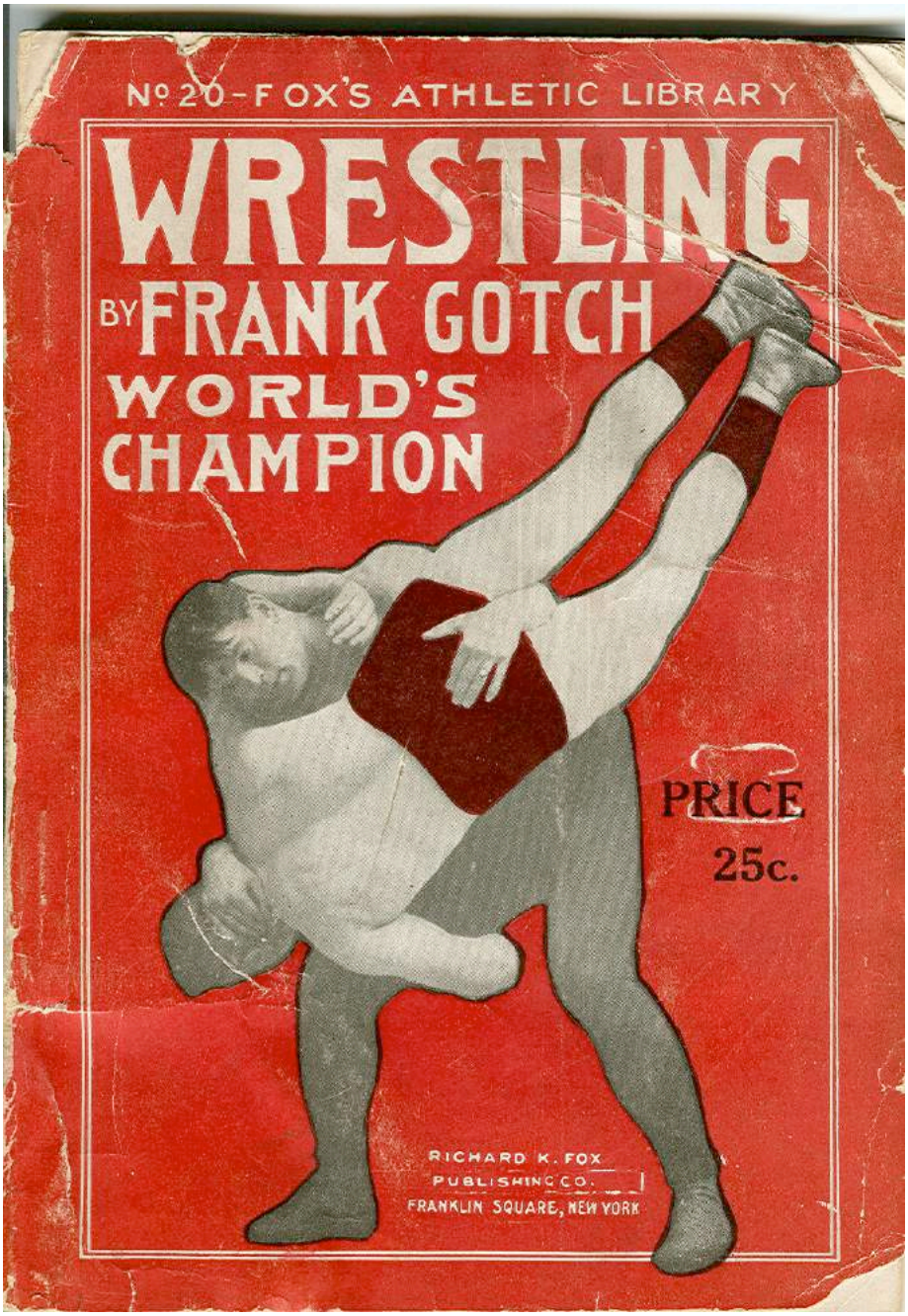
When one talks about the bouts of today being tough because of the grimaces and grunts, we old timers who took it from such stars as I met, think today's bouts are like candy compared to what I had undergone in the matches I've just described.

And with the story of Bothner's career, told by the greatest lightweight wrestler of modern times, we end our history of wrestling champions, the story of the mat sport from Milo to the present day.



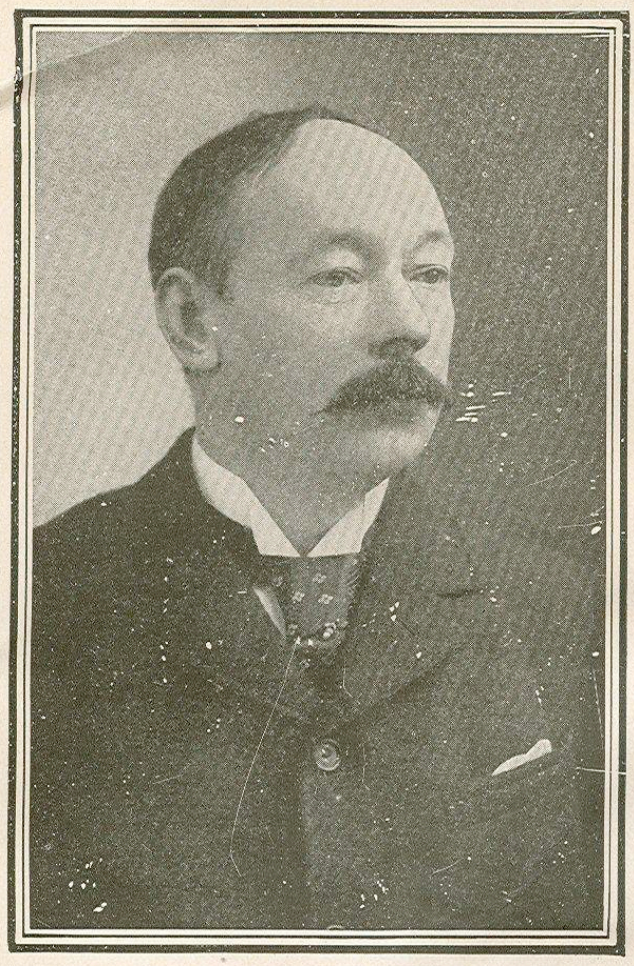
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## Wrestling and How To Train by Frank Gotch





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# WRESTLING

—AND—

# HOW TO TRAIN

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BY FRANK GOTCH

CHAMPION OF THE WORLD

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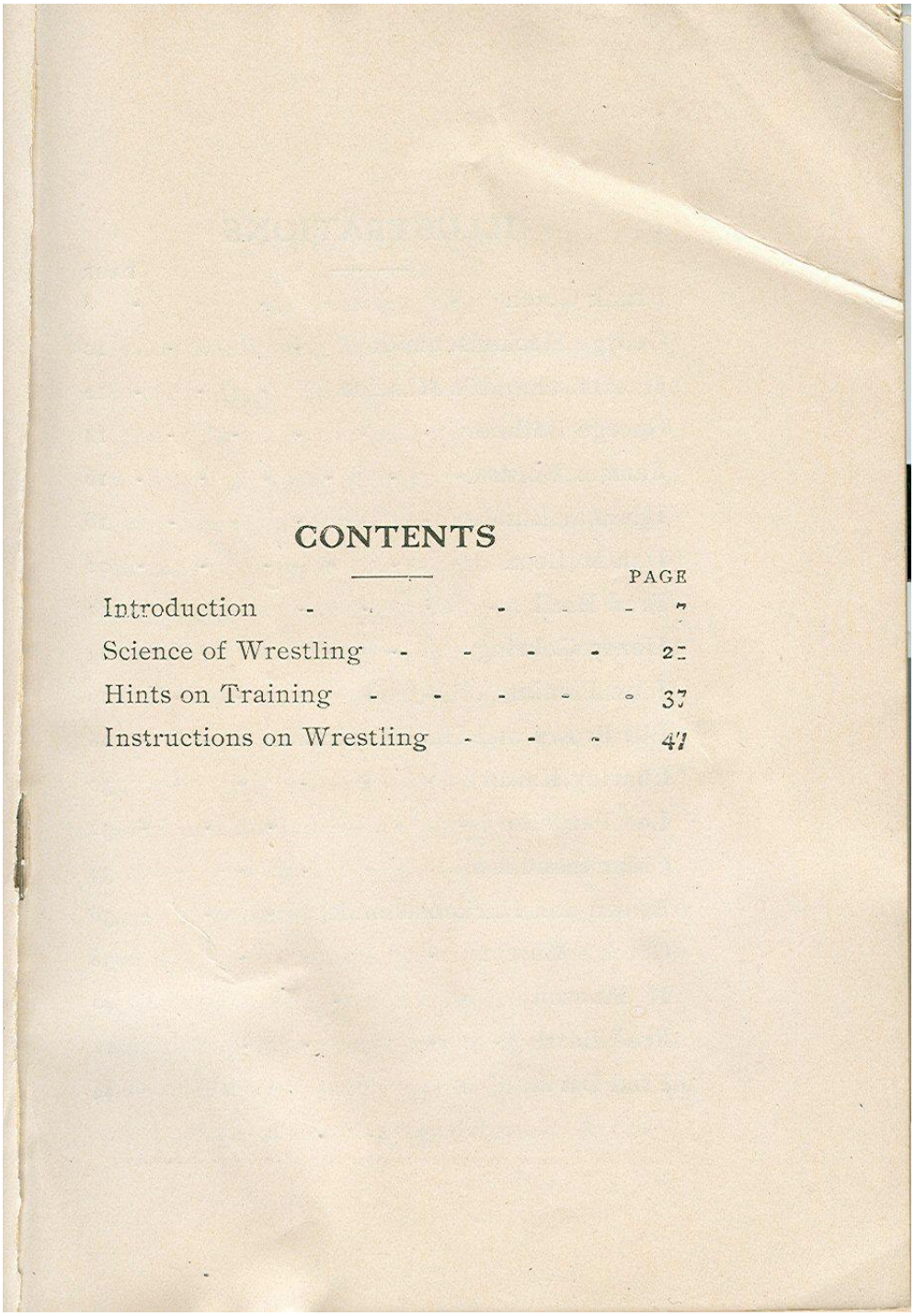
ILLUSTRATED WITH PHOTOS SPECIALLY POSED FOR BY FRANK GOTCH AND OSCAR SAMUELSON

RICHARD K. FOX PUBLISHING COMPANY

FRANKLIN SQUARE, NEW YORK CITY



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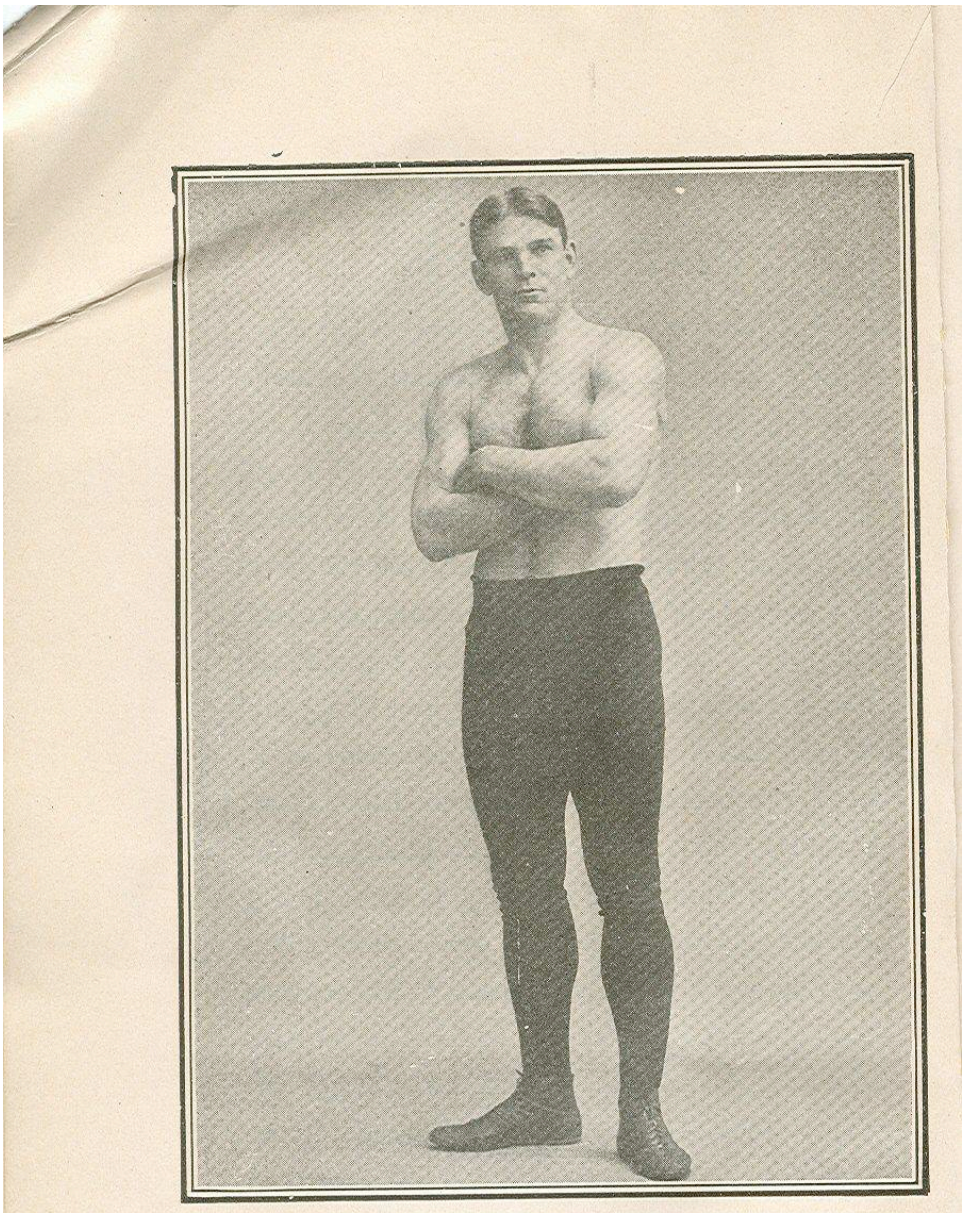
# INTRODUCTION

By Horace Lerch.

In winning the World's Wrestling Championship from George Hackenschmidt, the Russian Lion, in the bout decided in Chicago, on April 3, 1908, Frank Gotch, the young American grappler, attained the highest pinnacle of fame in this branch of professional sport, and, hard as his tasks have been in the rough battle to the top, it is quite likely that he will find even a more difficult time of it, after the first blush of triumph has passed, and title matches will succeed the earlier and easier emoluments of a championship.

But Gotch should be well qualified to undertake the work which will confront him, and we can have every confidence in his future. He is young, strong, ambitious, has fought his way to popularity, has come to the front in the face of disasters which would have nipped in the bud the career of a less determined fellow.

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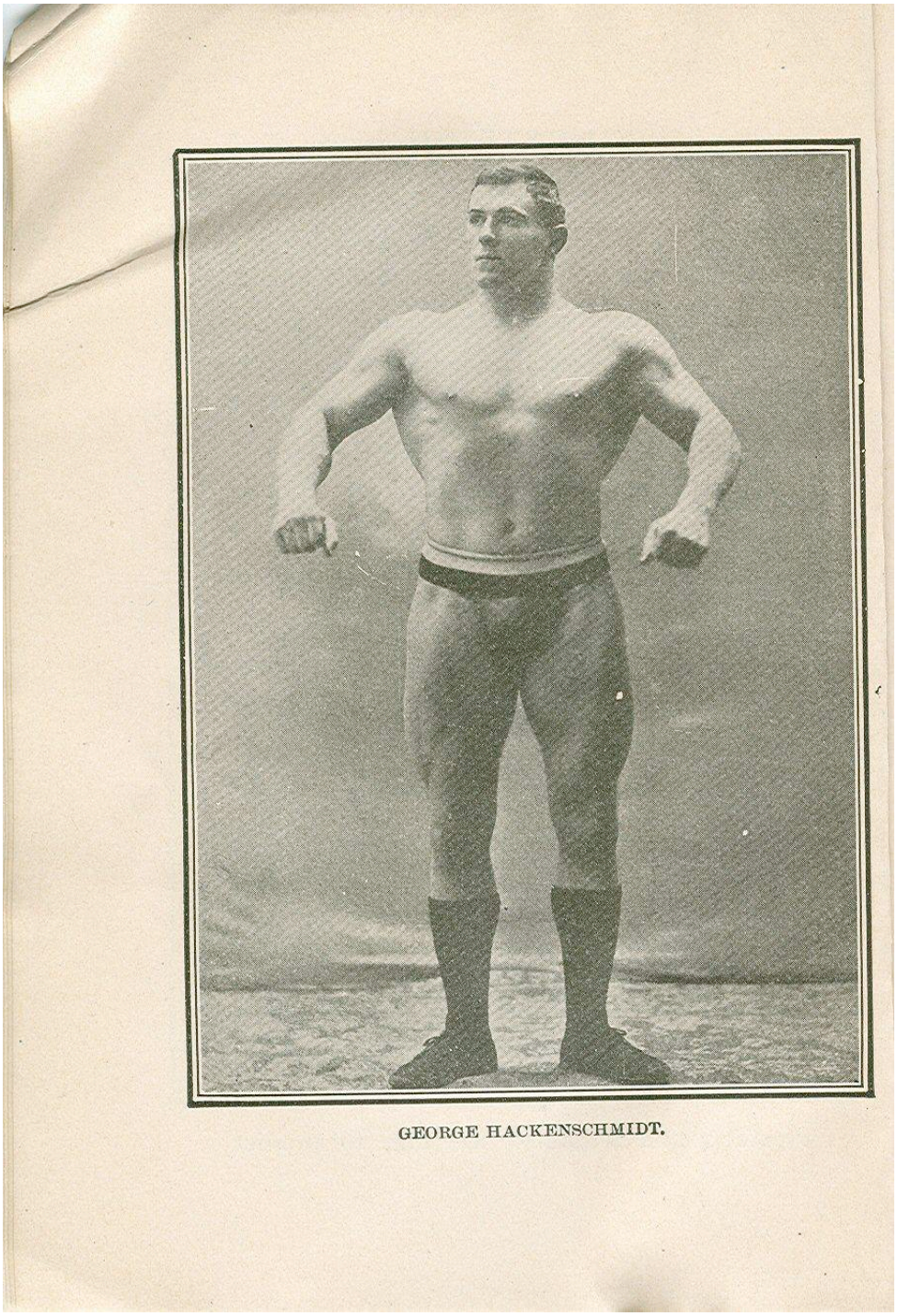
FRANK GOTCH, WORLD'S CHAMPION.


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And, we must remember that good judges among the veteran students of the sport of wrestling declare Gotch the best man who ever stood at the head of the American mat, outclassing—in strength, endurance and style combined—even such great stars of other days as Joe Acton, Edwin Bibby, Clarence Whistler, Strangler Evan Lewis, Jack Carkeek, Farmer Burns, Dan McLeod, Tom Jenkins, and other men whose names have echoed in the hall of sporting fame.

Scarcely past thirty years of age, Gotch, granted that he has already accomplished much, would appear to have a brilliant career yet in store. Ten years ago few would have linked his name with championship wrestling. Still, he was a sturdy youngster in those days, and it is now an old story how Dan McLeod, then in his prime, found the green country boy a bad customer, when, under an alias, the veteran Scot was touring the country. McLeod defeated Gotch then, but his knowledge of wrestling and wrestlers led him to predict

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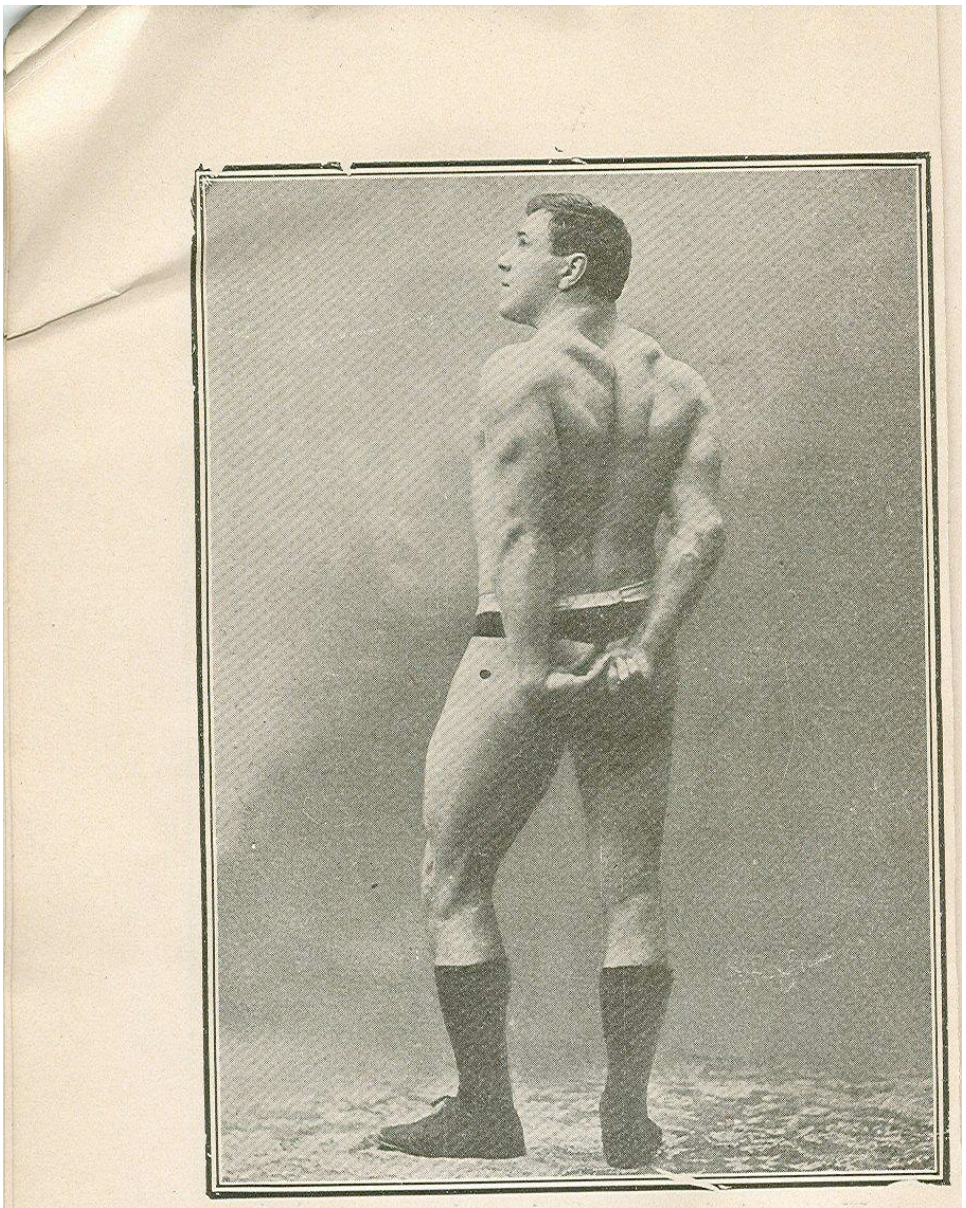
GEORGE HACKENSCHMIDT.


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glowing prospects for the then boy, if he did not abandon his mat exercise. Gotch did not abandon it. Farmer Burns came along, had a rough match with Frank and annexed him as a partner. Much of his present ability Gotch acquired during his association with the Farmer, and to-day he is as proud to say so as Burns is to have him state the fact. Then followed the trip to the Klondike and a series of victories in the gold country, the greatest being the one-fall match for a side bet of $10,000, which Gotch won in a quarter of an hour, dethroning the Swedish champion of Dawson City and breaking the backers of the foreigner.

Before his departure to Alaska Gotch had had a try with Jenkins in Cleveland, and although holding the then American champion on his feet for more than two hours he finally lost the match. On his return to the Pacific Coast from the frozen North Gotch again tilted with Jenkins and won from him in Whatcom, Wash. A few months later he repeated the defeat in Jenkins' home town, Cleveland, and

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HACKENSCHMIDT'S BACK MUSCLES.

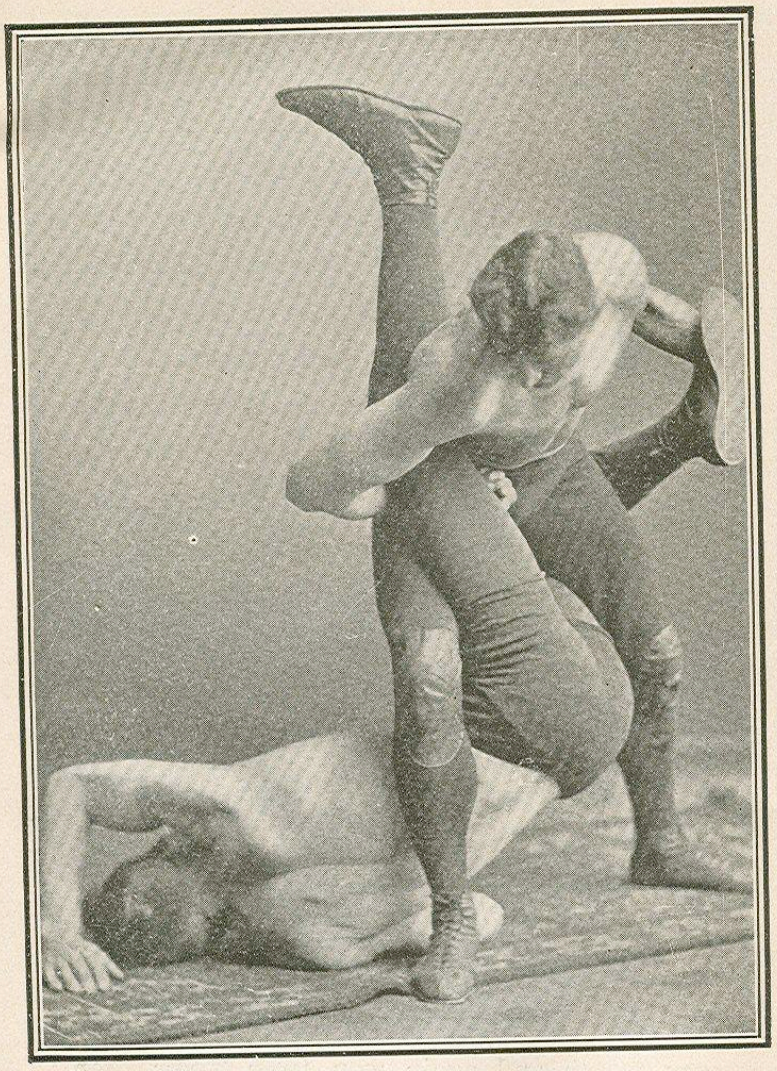

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few believed the Forest City rolling mill man had any chance to regain his laurels lost to the lusty youngster from the West.

Hackenschmidt was then on his way from Australia to make his first visit to America and a match with the champion of this country was in prospect. New York was clamoring for a sight of its new wrestling champion, the challenger of Jeffries for the prize ring crown, and Gotch consented to still another match with Jenkins in the Metropolis. Gotch had always said that "they beat me and made me like it in the old days, but the more I beat them now the less they seem to like it, and ask for more."

A quick illness seized Gotch on the eve of his match with Jenkins in New York. He went on the mat far from a well man, hoping for the best, but lost. Hackenschmidt, who had previously won from Jenkins in London, arrived in New York, made a catch-as-catch-can match and again won from Tom; then turned a deaf ear to Gotch's challenge and

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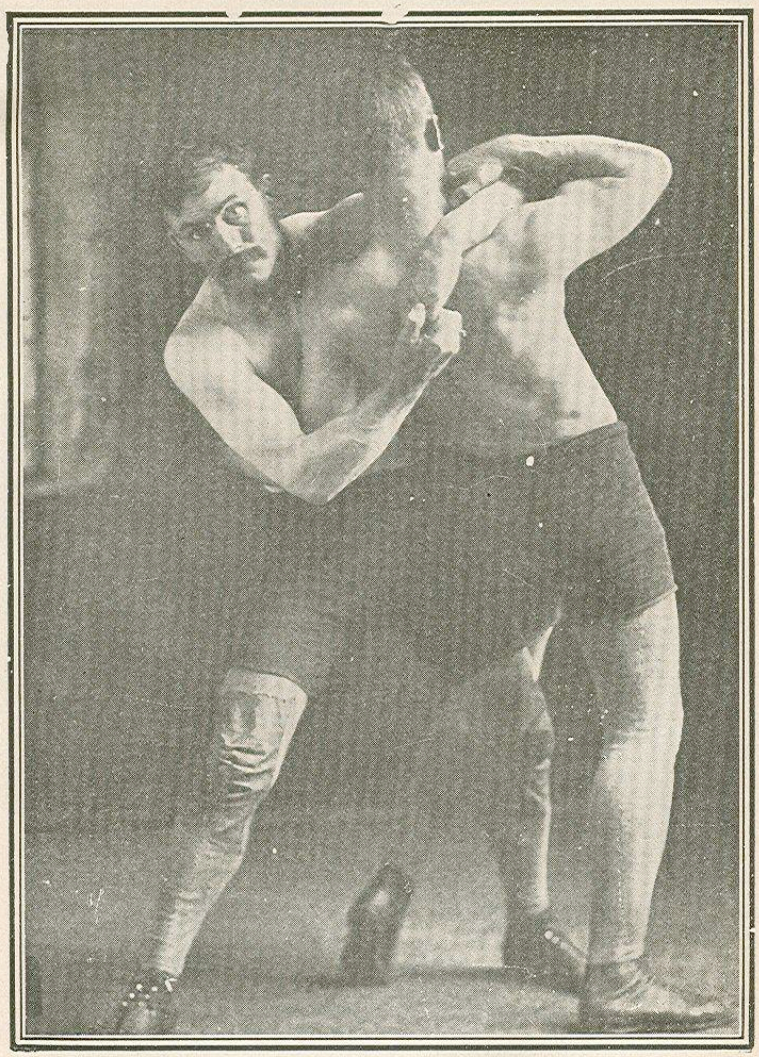
GEORGE BOTHNER LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPION.


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treated him with contempt. After the Lion's return home, in May, 1905, Gotch again met Jenkins in New York. Preparation for three successive matches had put the old warhorse in splendid physical trim. Gotch, not yet returned to his finest form, engaged in what proved to be a terrific battle, long to be remembered by Metropolitan sporting enthusiasts, Jenkins winning the third and deciding fall only after nearly three hours of continuous wrestling, the match lasting until nearly 2 o'clock in the morning, in Madison Square Garden.

This double defeat at the hands of the man from whom he had wrested the championship fairly staggered Gotch, but events proved that he was but temporarily stunned, and that his indomitable courage could not be subdued. With his reputation to be carved anew he started, in the Autumn of 1905, what resulted in a whirlwind match campaign, which carried him to all sections of the Continent, a campaign which for number of miles travelled and

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FARMER BURNS, GOTCH'S INSTRUCTOR.

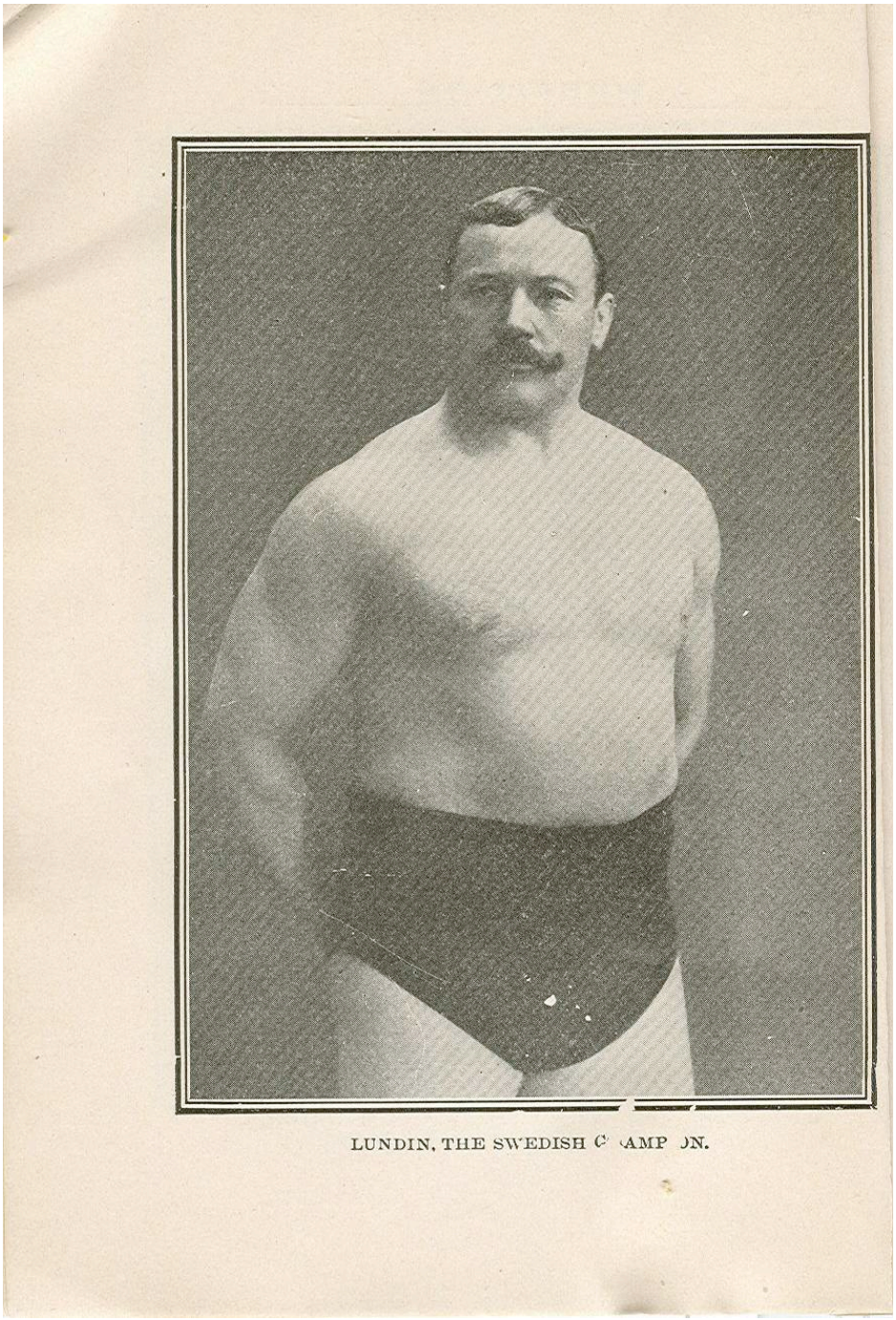


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opponents defeated will scarcely ever be duplicated. This grand tour culminated in May, 1906, in Kansas City, when Gotch again won back the American championship from Jenkins in two falls out of three.

In the Chicago match with George Hackenschmidt, Gotch was magnificently trained and seconded by those two great veterans, Farmer Burns, who was responsible for his early development, and Jack Carkeek, who toured England as a champion at the time of Hackenschmidt's advent, and whose intimate knowledge of the methods and character of the big fellow made him an invaluable ally. With these two men Gotch planned a victory which was admirably executed. He had often said: "If I meet Hackenschmidt it may last a minute, it may last an hour, but, defeat or victory, short or long, it will be a contest." And it was a contest, of more than two hours; a contest which spelled victory for the American every minute after the first fifteen had witnessed the burly champion's strength

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LUNDIN, THE SWEDISH C AMP ON.

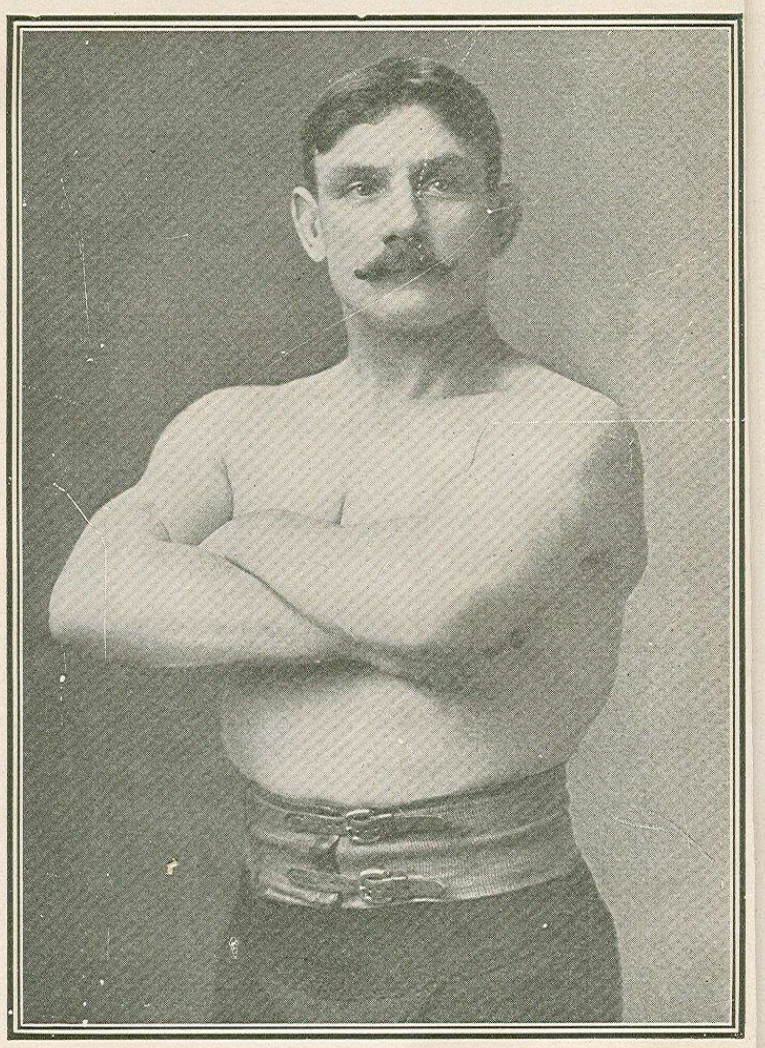


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sapped in futile attack. Hackenschmidt was stopped, threatened, completely routed, and incidentally, it took some man to still the Lion. The victory was the crowning triumph to a remarkable athletic career.

Gotch, a man of intelligence as well as strength, has amassed considerable wealth as a result of his physical exertions. He is land rich in Iowa, his native State, has plenty of ready cash, and possesses other valuable interests.

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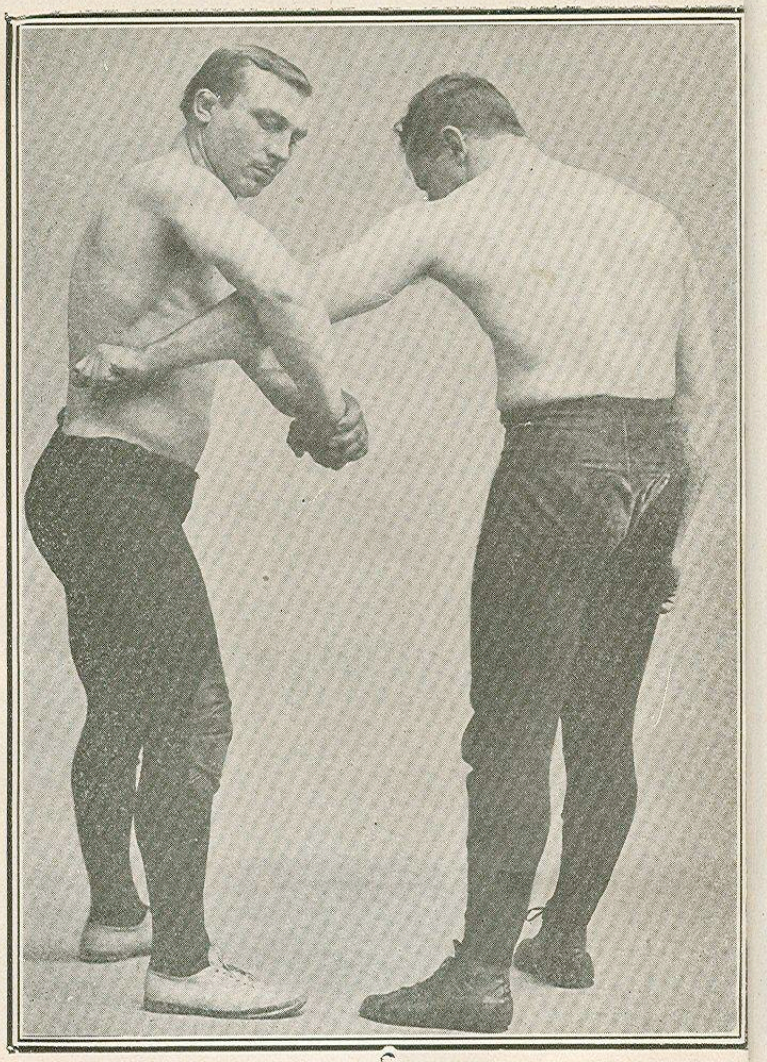
DAN McLEOD, EX-CHAMPION.


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# SCIENCE OF WRESTLING

In the wrestling struggles of the long ago, when the sport had its real modern beginning, the ordinary attire was worn, but nowadays the wrestlers divest themselves of anything in the way of superfluous weight, or what is calculated to interfere with the perfect freedom of their movements. The ancient Greeks and Romans, for instance, wrestled in a state of complete nudity, or with a strip of cloth around the loins. Modern wrestlers wear skin tights on their lower limbs, with arms and torso bare. In Turkey, however, leather drawers are the rule, and the grip may be put upon them. In Switzerland, the drawers or the belt may be grasped in order to secure a hold. Then in the earlier Grecian and Roman contests, the bodies and limbs of the wrestlers were plentifully anointed with oil and grease, the object of this undoubtedly being to prevent a hold being secured by an opponent.

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FRED BEELL, OF WISCONSIN.

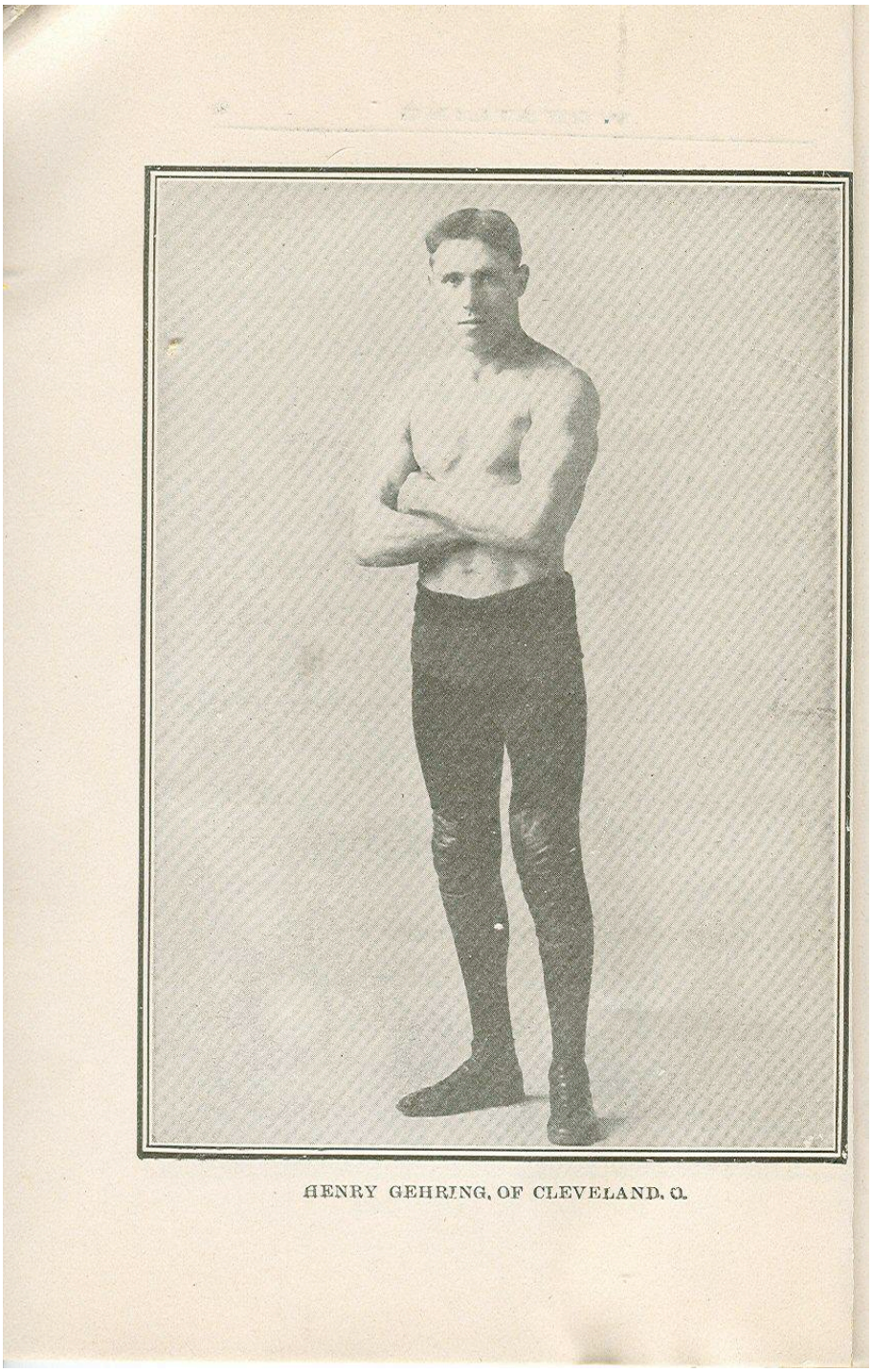


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Our modern articles of agreement, however, state explicitly that no oil or grease shall be used, and as a set-off to the method pursued by the ancients, who rubbed their hands on the sand in the arena, wrestlers of to-day are debarred from using resin, drugs or any preparation in order to increase the tenacity of their hold.

Again brutality is sternly repressed to-day. Practically any hold or method of procedure was allowed in the days of old. Men might strangle, gouge or snap the limbs of an adversary, provided they had an opportunity of doing so. But in a modern match the strangle hold is not allowed as a rule, neither is the full Nelson, or the hang, and many referees even refuse to allow the "arm-across-the-mouth" hold, although it is occasionally brought into use when the contest is under purely Lancashire rules. No matter what may be said, there is absolutely no brutality attached to modern wrestling. Men are competing to-day who were before the public twenty years ago.

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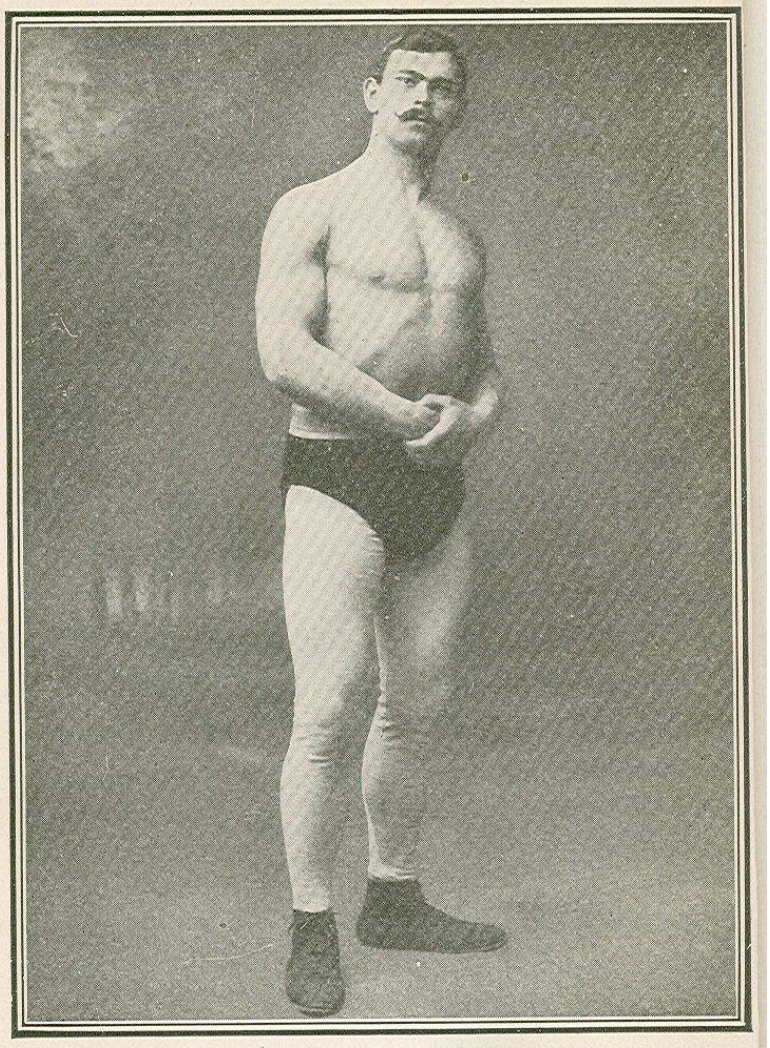
HENRY GEHRING, OF CLEVELAND, O.


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and a man may remain very near the head of his profession until he reaches fifty years of age. Jack Carkeek, for instance, is forty-two; Joe Carroll is thirty-four, and Tom Jenkins is thirty-two. These are but three, and although it cannot be denied that a wrestler has reached his prime at forty, the fact still remains that skill and experience go far to balance a handicap in the matter of years.

And now, just a brief explanation concerning the various styles. Taking Greco-Roman first, no tripping is allowed; every hold must be above the waist, and the struggle is fought out upon the mat. This is not edifying, but the contest terminates when both shoulders are pressed down. Wrestlers in the Cornwall and Devon style compete in strongly made jackets, all holds being above the waist, or on any portion of the jacket. Kicking is now declared to be foul, but tripping is allowed, and a man is beaten when two shoulders and one hip, two hips and one shoulder, or both shoulders, before any other portion of the

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JOHN PIENING, THE BUTCHER BOY.


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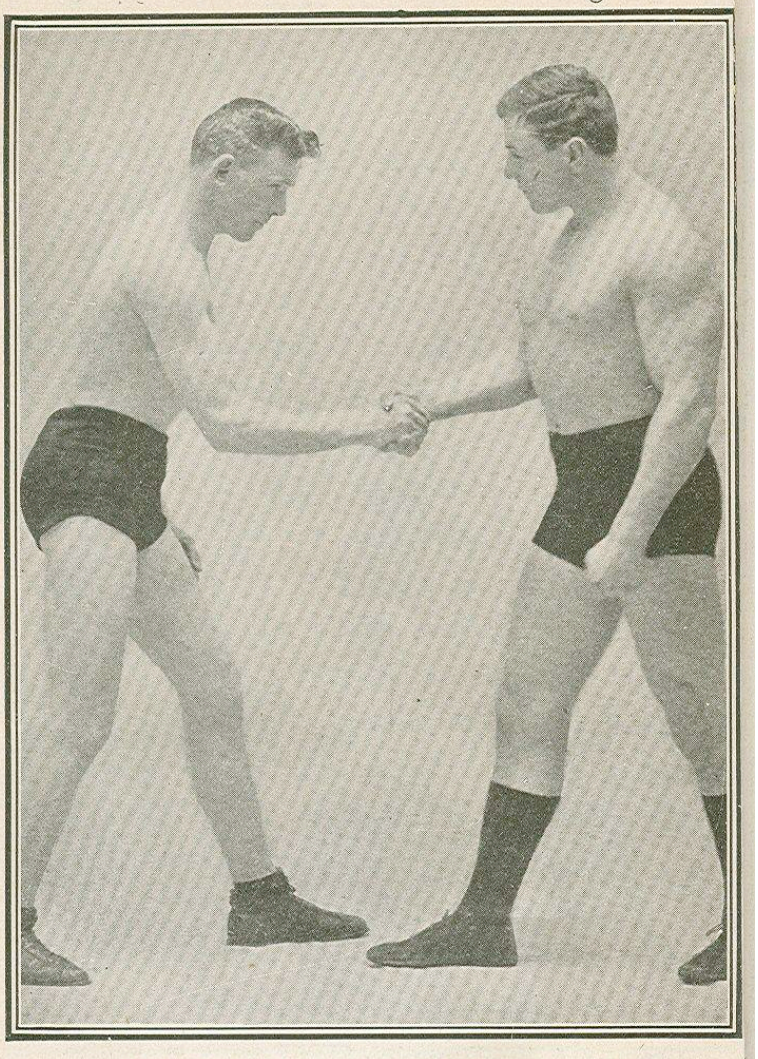
body, touch the ground, and the fall is gained.

Under the Cumberland and Westmoreland system the men stand chest pressed against chest, and chin on the opponent's shoulder. The grasp is around the body, one arm under and the other over the shoulder, each man joining his hands behind his opponent. Kicking is forbidden, and if both fall together, the bout is recommenced. When one goes down before the other, then the fall is gained.

In Ireland the style is termed collar and elbow, the wrestlers gripping the elbow with one hand and the collar with the other. Neither must loose his hold until the fall is gained, victory remaining with the man who may be able to retain his feet. In Scotland the style is a hybrid one, two points, or both shoulders, being down, and the fall then gained.

Catch-as-catch-can, however, is without a doubt the favorite style at the present time, and despite the fact that some ground work is absolutely unavoidable, every bout is bright and interesting from beginning to end. Any

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BILL BROWN AND GEORGE HACKENSCHMIDT.

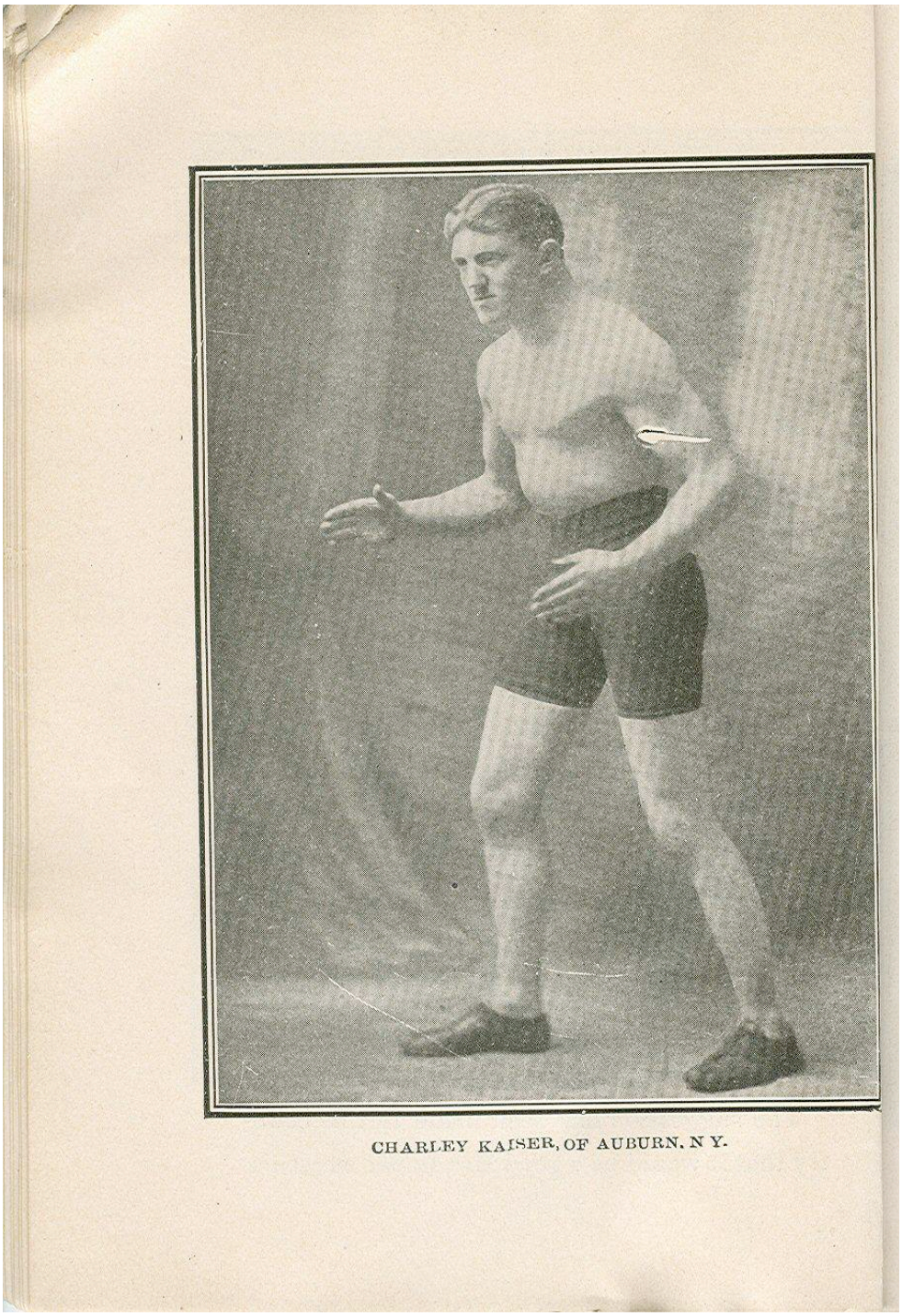

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hold is allowed excepting those previously mentioned, the full Nelson and the hand, together with the strangle hold, and the hammerlock where amateurs are concerned, the leg work being an especially strong feature where the champions are concerned.

The good wrestler is as supple and as light as a ballet dancer, and there is little advantage to be gained in going to the mat and allowing an opponent to work above you. Brute strength is not so much a necessity as in Greco-Roman wrestling. Celerity of movement is the life and soul of catch-as-catch-can; a quick twist, and the expert has a grip on his man that he cannot escape from. The story of David and Goliath may be repeated. A little fellow, a born wrestler, will beat a bigger but a clumsier man every time. The English wrestlers are, as a rule, found at their best in the ranks of the twelve-stone and thirteen-stone men.

The suggestion has been made in this country that it would be a good idea to bar wrestlers

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CHARLEY KAISER, OF AUBURN, N Y.



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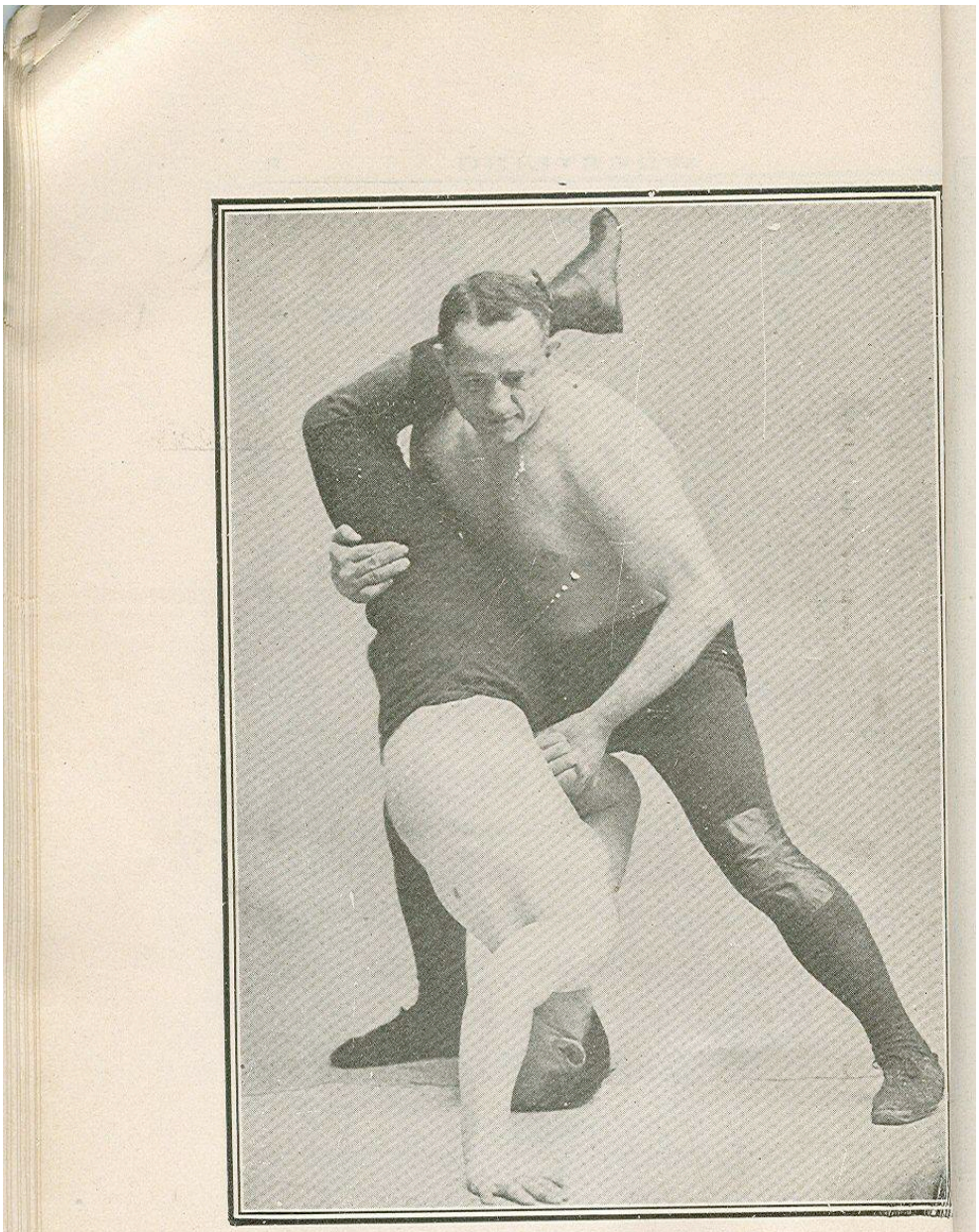
from meeting boxers on the mat, but it is a difficult matter to see just how that will be done. Many fake bouts have been held between fighters and wrestlers, and rarely is one on the level.

The grapplers, realizing that they could make some money by meeting fighters of reputation on the mat, consented to deals that would not be contenanced in a contest between two wrestlers.

There are very few fighters in the ring who are capable of holding their own on the carpet with experienced and well seasoned wrestlers. It is true that a pugilist makes wrestling a part of his daily training stunts. It is a fine exercise and helps to strengthen and develop muscles that aid him in his fights. But few of them become adepts at the game, just as there are very few wrestlers who make excellent scrappers.

When a fighter and a wrestler agree to a match on the mat the affair is sure to be a handicap one; that is, the wrestler undertakes

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LEO PARDELLO ITALIAN CHAMPION.

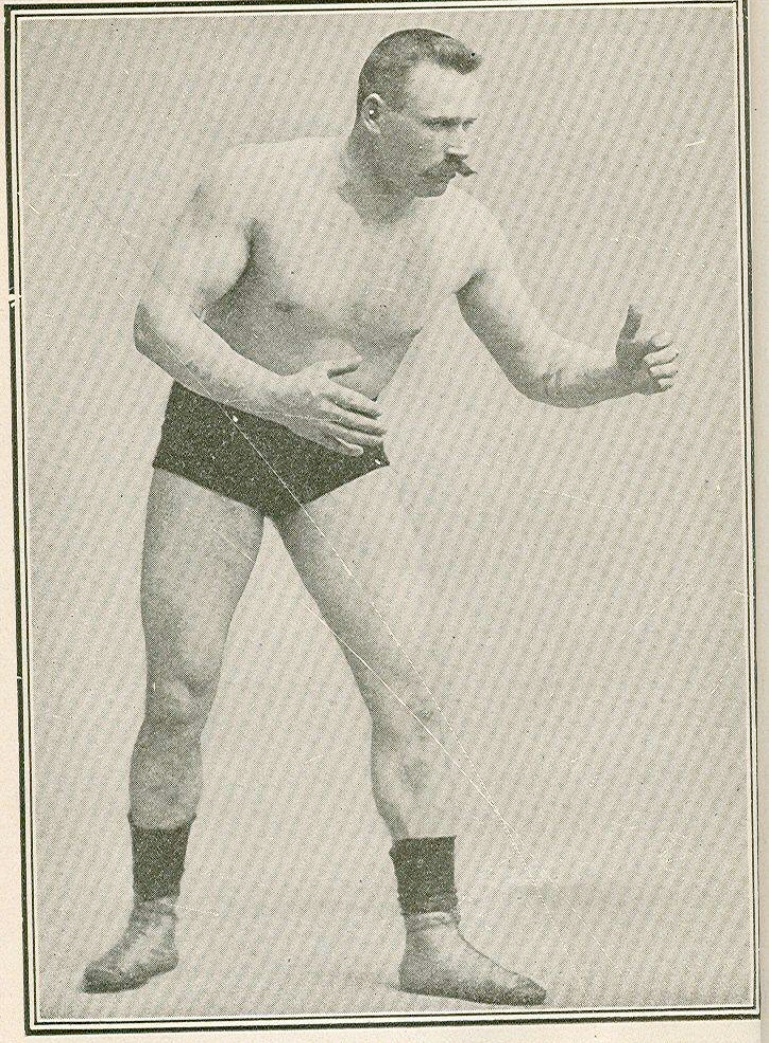


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to throw the fighter so many times in an hour, Usually it is three times. If the wrestler fails in his task he has a ready excuse, and if the fighter is thrown his reputation does not in the least suffer. He will say that it is not his forte and all that The public who go to see such contests are, as a rule, victimized. They do not see the genuine article because if the wrestler, unless he is a very inferior one, utilized all of his skill and was out to win in a hurry, would not have much trouble in putting his rival down in such quick time that the match would resolve itself into the worst kind of a farce.

A certain pugilist who has pretensions as a wrestler, will not go on with a match with a wrestler unless he is assured that his opponent will not handle him roughly, and will not throw him until a certain time. In this way he has been able to build up a reputation as a wrestler that does not belong to him. His followers, who are not acquainted with the inside workings of the game, have come to

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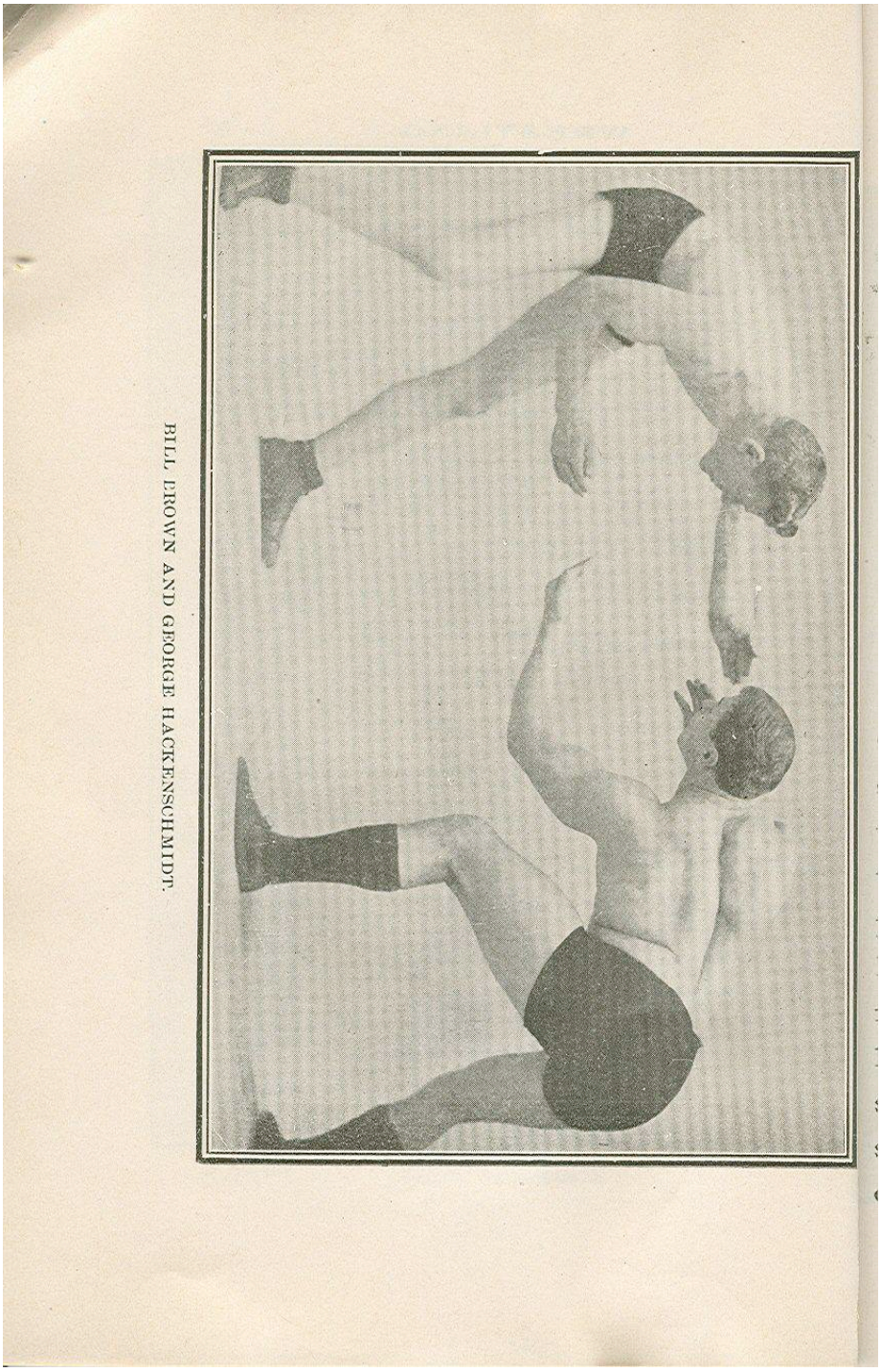
OSCAR SAMUELSON.


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look upon him as a wonderful mat artist, and consequently when he appears he is greeted by large crowds.

Such matches are certain to hurt wrestling in the long run. Handicap matches, anyway, leave a wrong impression, and in the opinion of many they should be frowned upon. To many folks they are worse than the exhibition bouts at the local theatres. These contests are usually for fifteen minutes. A lot of head spinning and unnecessary gyrations are indulged in, with the result that the outcome is a draw. Sometimes a man is thrown before the limit is reached. In nine times out of ten the affairs are rehearsed beforehand, because the monetary consideration is so small that the star grappler cannot afford to take any chances of injuring his reputation by being flopped himself.

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BILL BROWN AND GEORGE HACKENSCHMIDT.



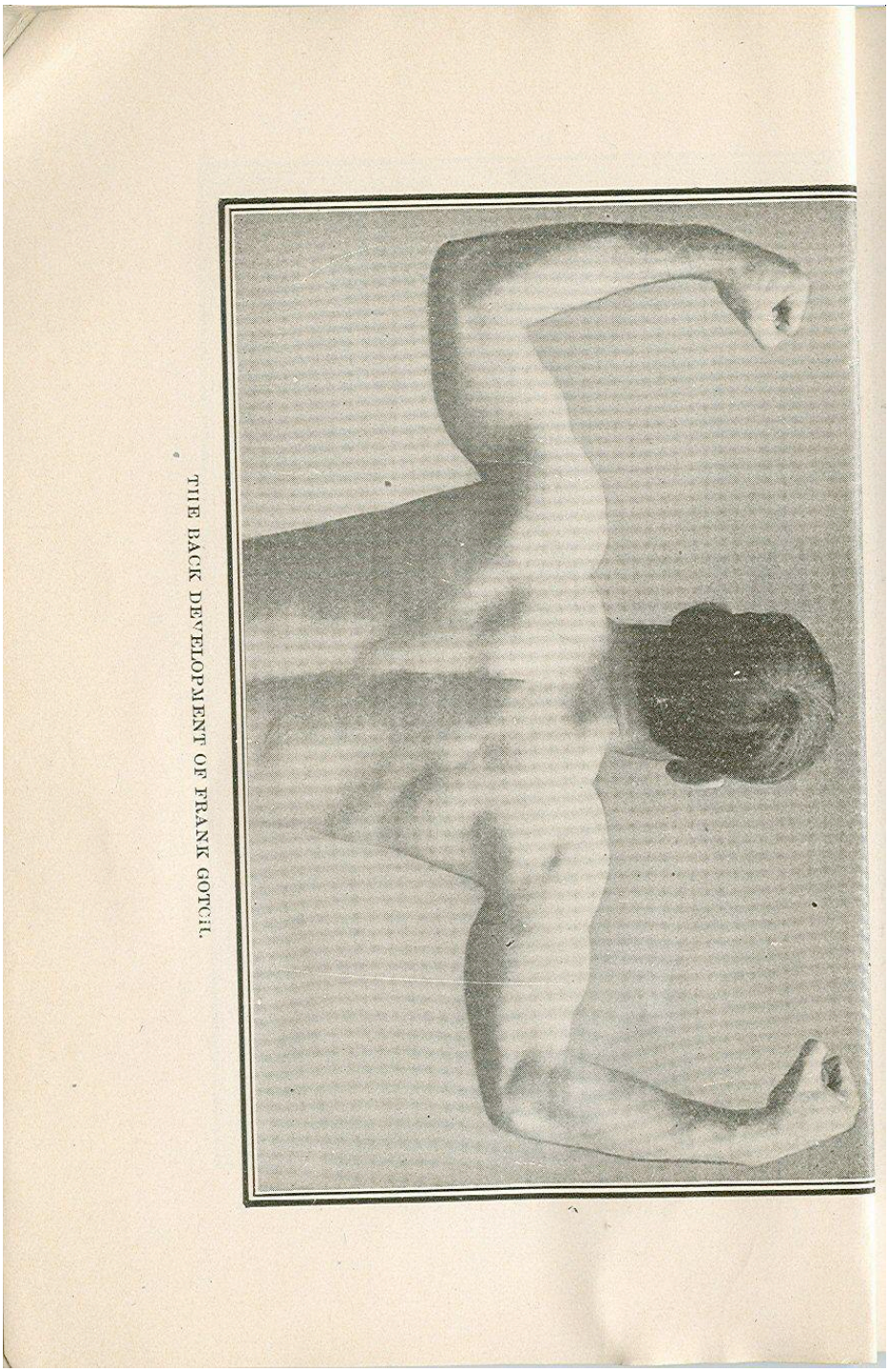
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# HINTS ON TRAINING

In view of the fact that wrestling calls for endurance and strength as well as wind those are the three things the amateur must cultivate from the beginning. With this object in view, however, he must not overlook the question of speed, which is as essential to the man on the mat as it is to the boxer in the ring.

Taken all in all there is nothing that will so develop a man's muscles and make him strong in mind and body and self reliant as wrestling. A young man would be very foolish to start in at once, without any preliminary preparation, on a rigorous course of training. He must season himself gradually by gymnastic work of a light character, increasing his tasks as he feels he is getting better and stronger, and he should not attempt any serious wrestling until his muscles are well enough developed to withstand the unusual

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THE BACK DEVELOPMENT OF FRANK GOTCH.



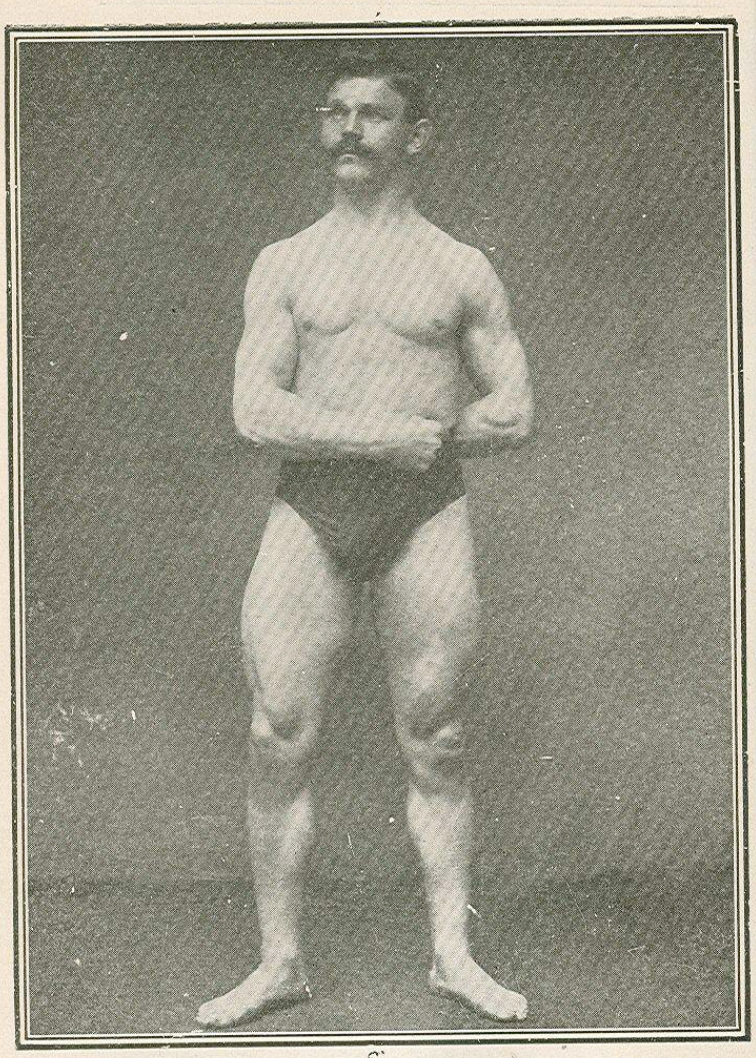
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and severe strain which will be put upon them.

As a pleasing and interesting diversion he can practice holds and counters with some friend, learn the quarter, half and full Nelsons, the hammerlock, the hiplock, the scissors, and in fact, all of the many varieties which are shown in this book on the following pages. How long it will take any certain person to get in what is known as good condition will depend entirely upon their constitution and their ability to work. One man might condition himself in a month, whereas it would take another at least three months to get in any kind of shape.

For the wind—and this must not be overlooked—take a course of running—on country roads where it is possible. Where it is not, then run anywhere. A half mile will do if you haven't been used to it, the student himself will be the best judge of that, but don't cover so great a distance that you are fagged out at the finish. Work gradually into a long easy stride and keep it up. On the return a

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H. HANSEN, Y. M. C. A. INSTRUCTOR, OF SYRACUSE, N. Y.



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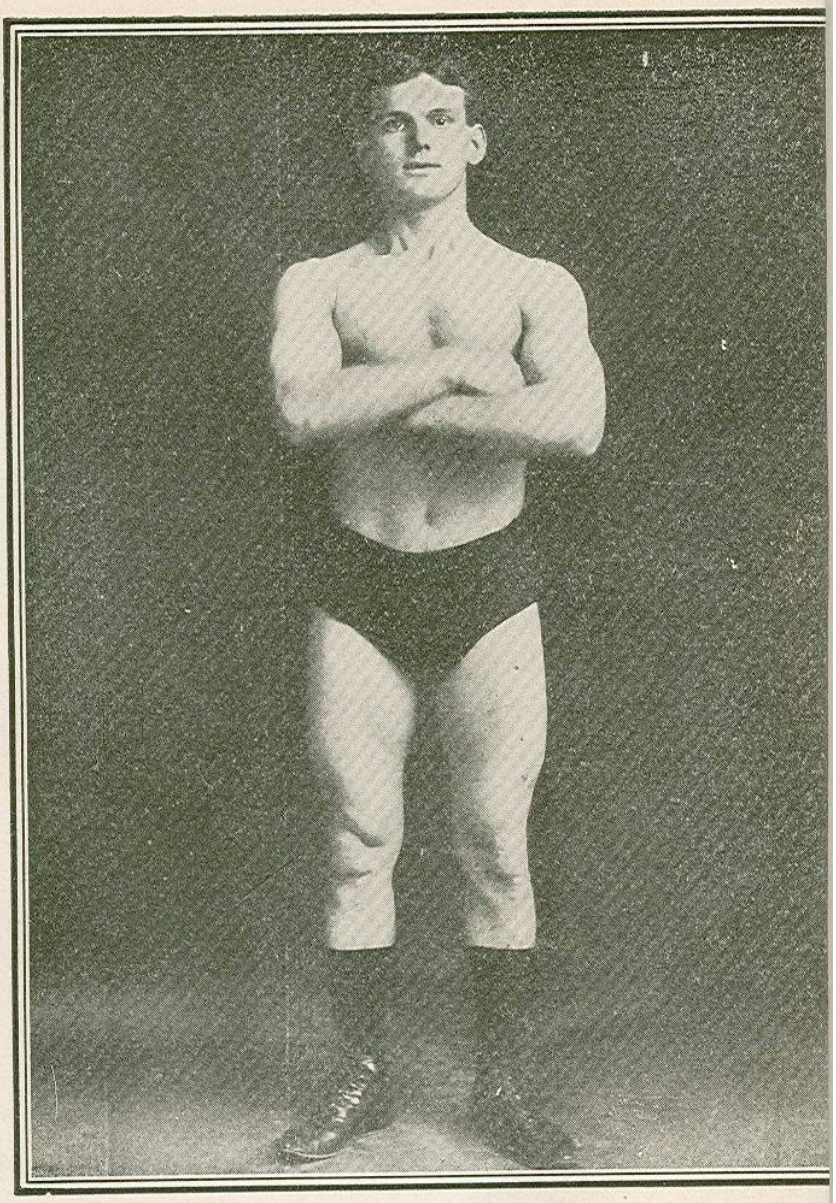
good rub down with a coarse towel, followed by a cold plunge or a cold sponge bath will be found very invigorating.

Bear in mind that the object to be attained is the hardening of no one set of muscles, but of all the muscles in the entire body, as well as the heart and lungs. Bear in mind that wrestling in itself is the greatest of all athletic exercises.

Cut out all kinds of tobacco and liquors from the start and forget that they ever existed if you want to amount to anything physically. Great athletes may have been great drinkers in their day, but they could have been greater and their powers of endurance would have been more lasting if they had been total abstainers, and in the end John Barleycorn puts them all down and out.

When you feel that you have reached that stage where you can stand fifteen minutes hard work get a wrestling partner. In a friendly bout you need not be particular about the weight, and, if possible, get someone who

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FRED (DEMON) BARTL.

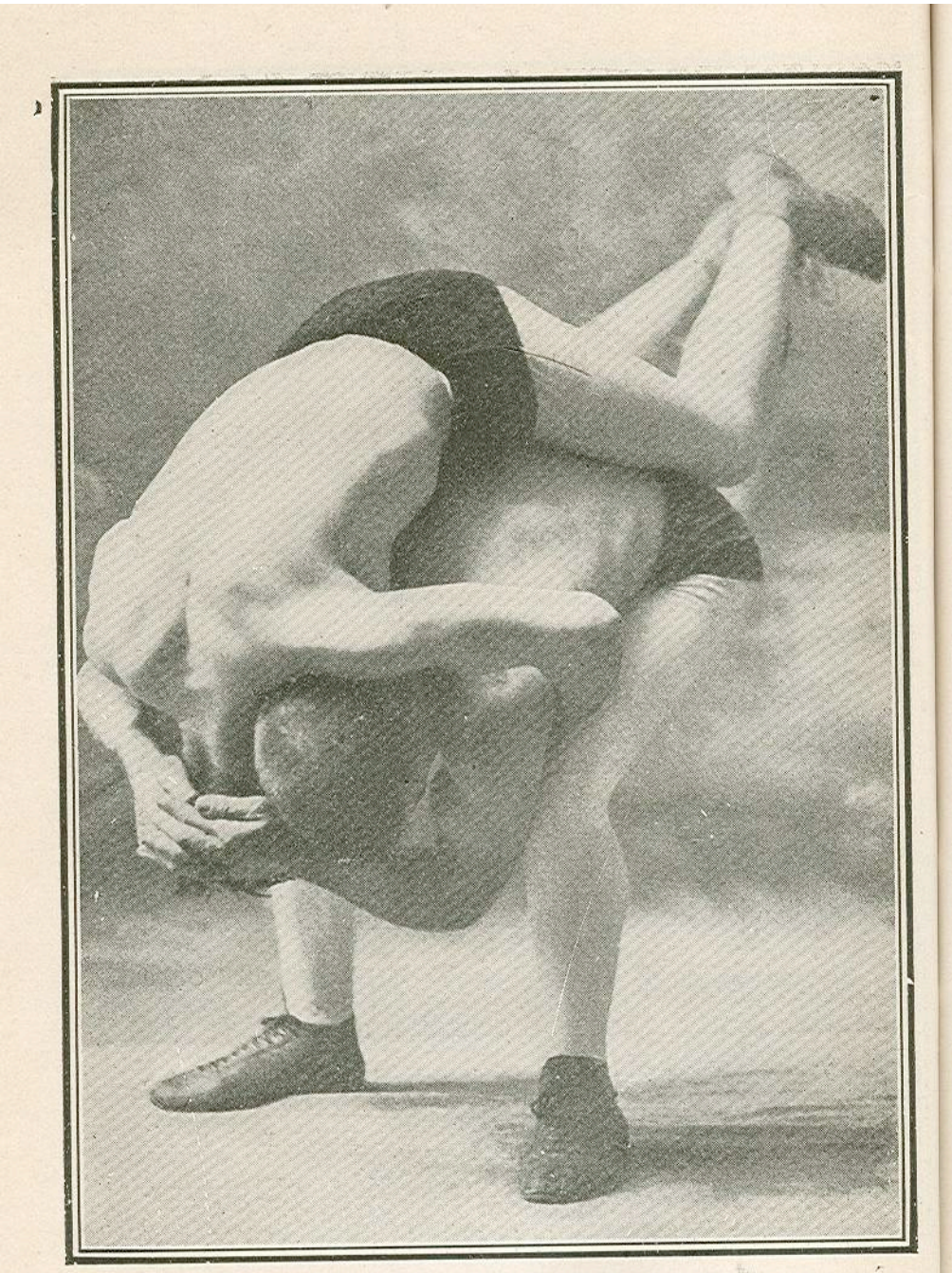

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knows more about the game than you do, and you will be able to learn from him. Don't expect to be told everything, but use your eyes as well as your brains. Study out the different situations, and try to figure out in advance what your opponent intends to do. In that way you'll be ready to block him. In beating Hackenschmidt, the world's champion, I had him all figured out in advance, and I knew what moves he intended to make, in many cases, before he put them into execution, and if he had not quit I would have turned him on his back, just as I knew I would when we shook hands at the beginning of hostilities. Study out the counters for the different holds, and always be prepared to squeeze out of a tight corner when the occasion arises.

In applying the toe hold do so with the utmost care in order that you may not seriously maim your opponent. You will appreciate how effective it is if it is properly done.

A book of this size on so important a sport as wrestling must necessarily be incomplete to

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FRED BARTH, KITTANNING, PA.


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a certain extent. So if there is anything between these covers concerning which you are in doubt, I will be glad to answer any question you may ask, in the columns of the "Police Gazette," if you will send your query to me care of that office.

But, above all things, don't expect to become a proficient wrestler without going through a series of preliminary training and exercising, which is a common failing among amateurs. Get strong gradually, bearing in mind that great speed is always a necessary adjunct to everything in the athletic line except weight-lifting, hammer throwing, etc.

Never lose your temper for an instant. Keep cool always and study every move of your opponent, and if possible, try to anticipate what he intends doing. That is half of the game. The other half is to try and deceive him as to your next movement.

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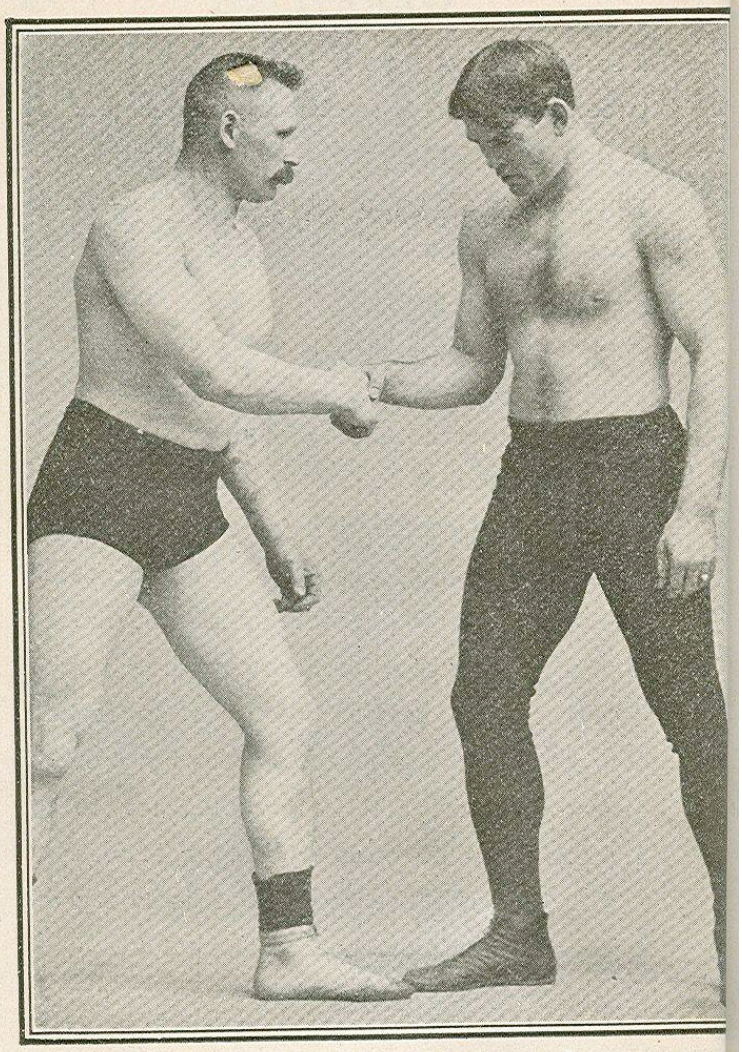
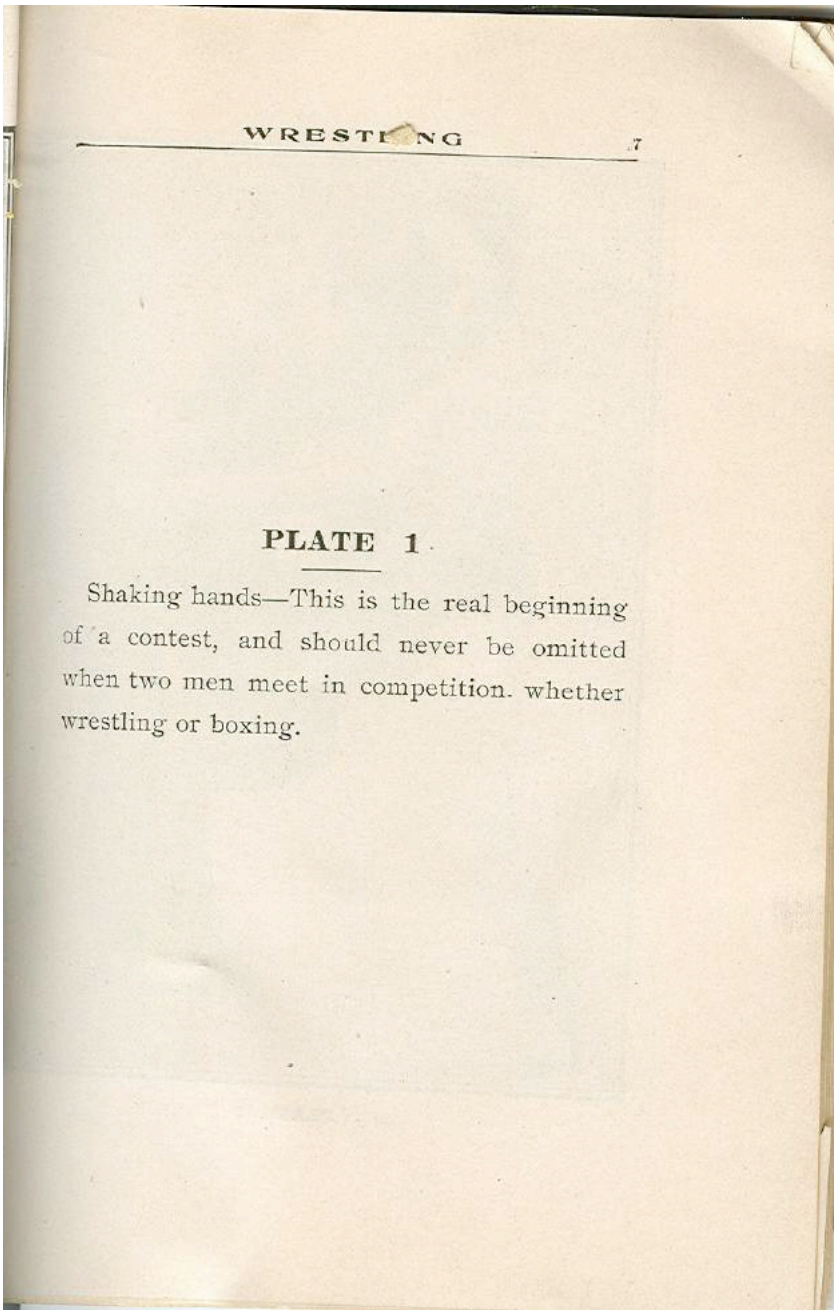


PLATE 1


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WRESTLING 7

## PLATE 1.

Shaking hands—This is the real beginning of a contest, and should never be omitted when two men meet in competition, whether wrestling or boxing.

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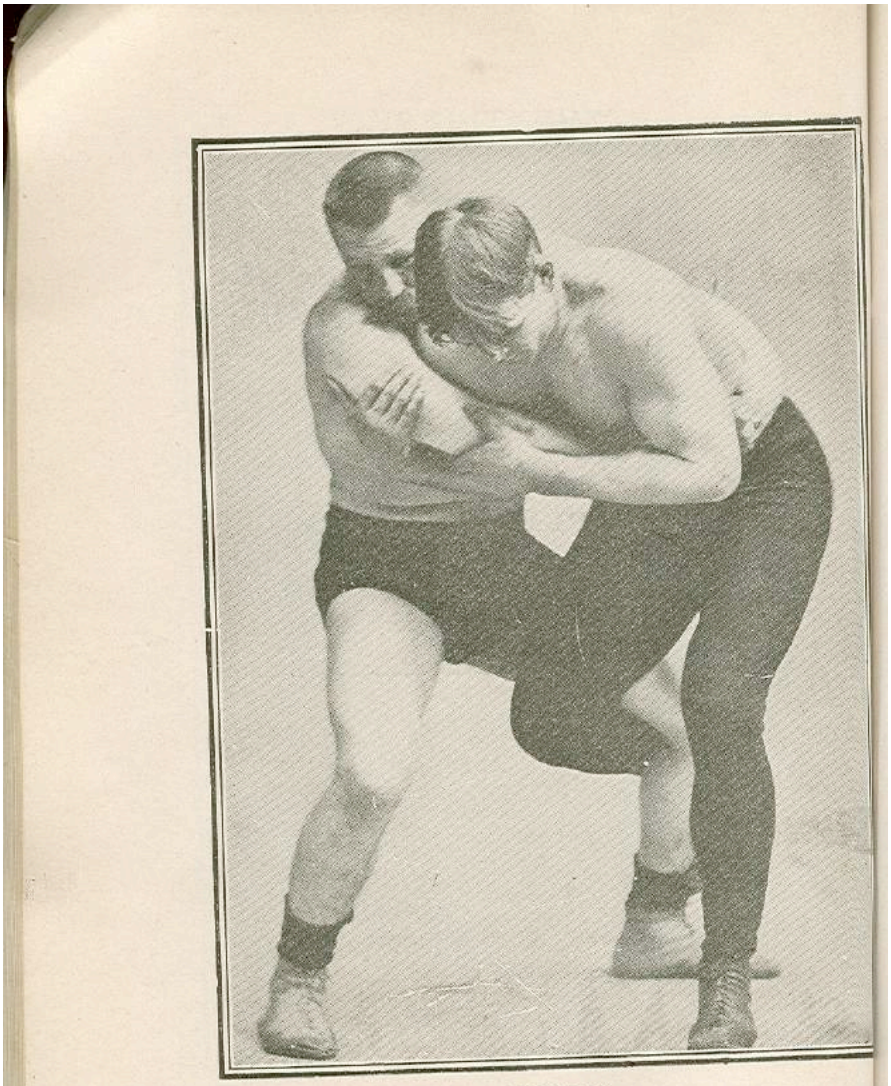


PLATE 2


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## PLATE 2

This shows the grapevine hold, standing, and it can be worked from either side, whichever is most convenient.

Seize your opponent by the arm, between the elbow and shoulder, pull him with a quick movement close to you and then twine your right leg about the lower half of his left leg, locking the toe against his shin bone. Pull his leg toward you and he will go down.

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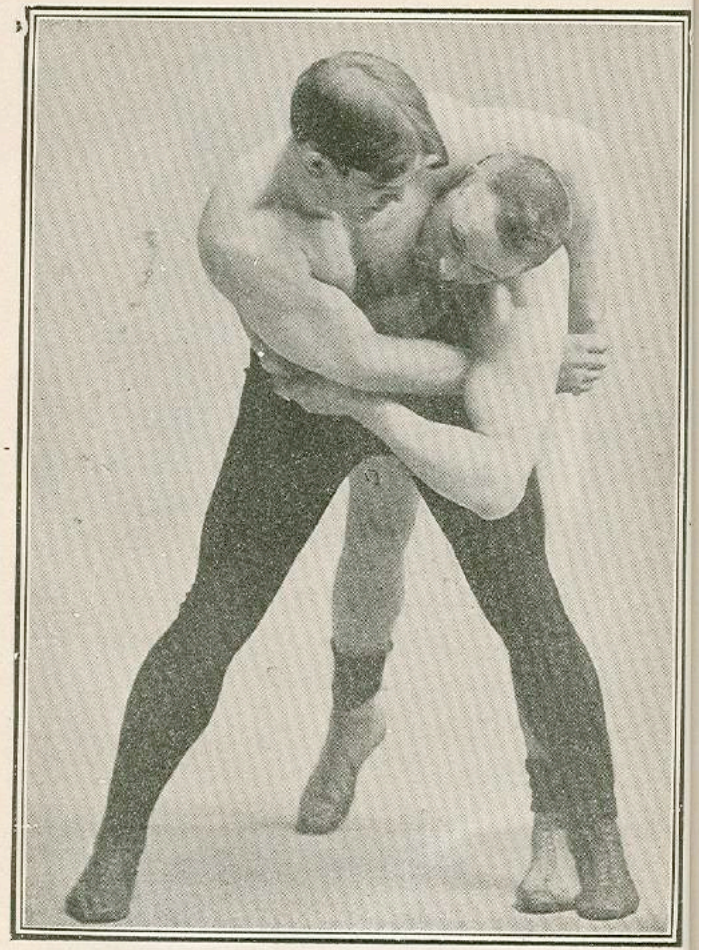


PLATE 3


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## PLATE 3

It is difficult to describe this. The original aggressor had secured a hiplock, but the tables have been turned and the situation reversed by the arm and neck hold. There is a fall imminent when the man with the arm and neck hold by displacing his opponent's left foot, brings him down with a sudden twist.

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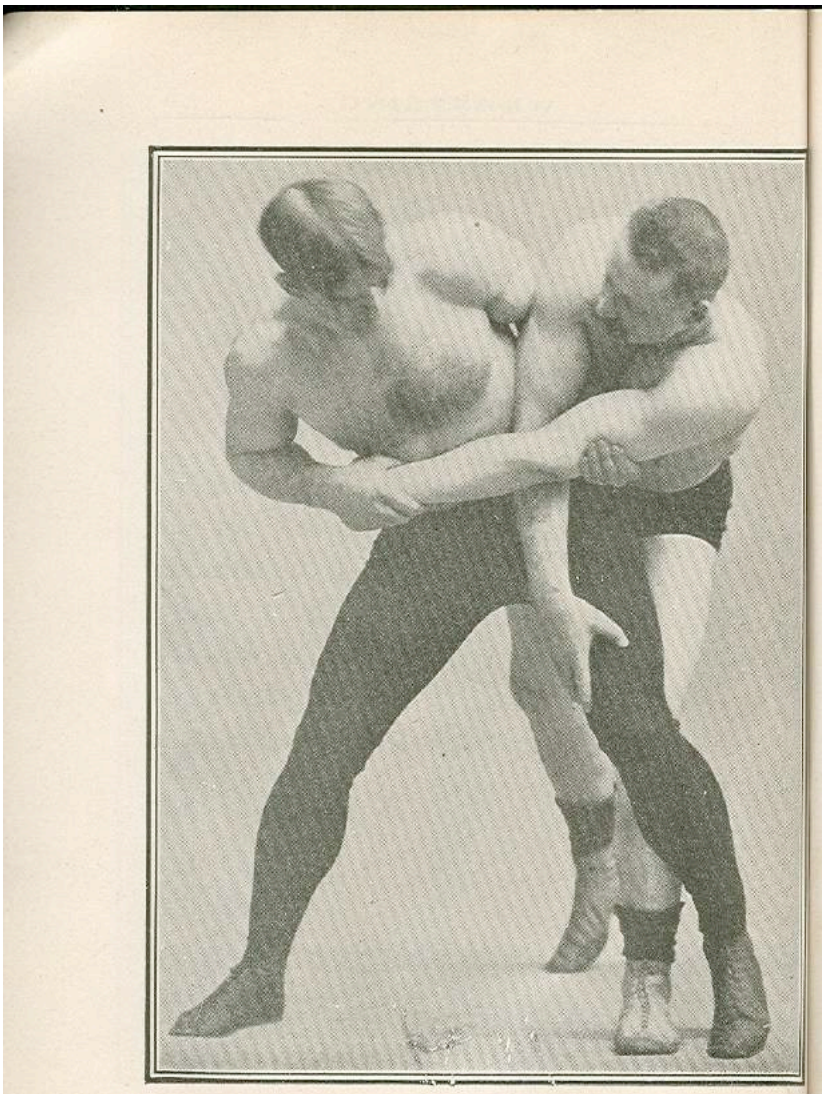
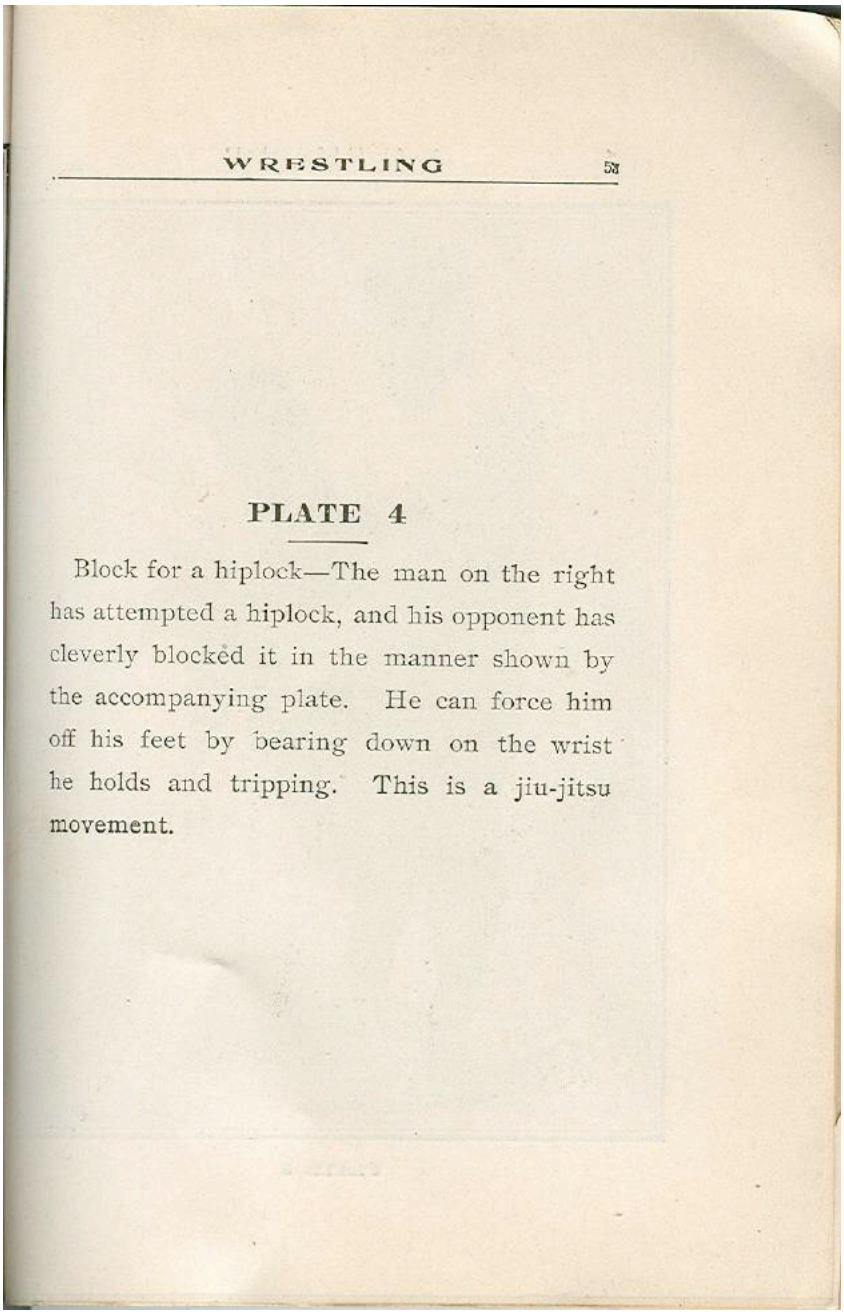


PLATE 4


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## PLATE 4

Block for a hiplock—The man on the right has attempted a hiplock, and his opponent has cleverly blocked it in the manner shown by the accompanying plate. He can force him off his feet by bearing down on the wrist he holds and tripping. This is a jiu-jitsu movement.

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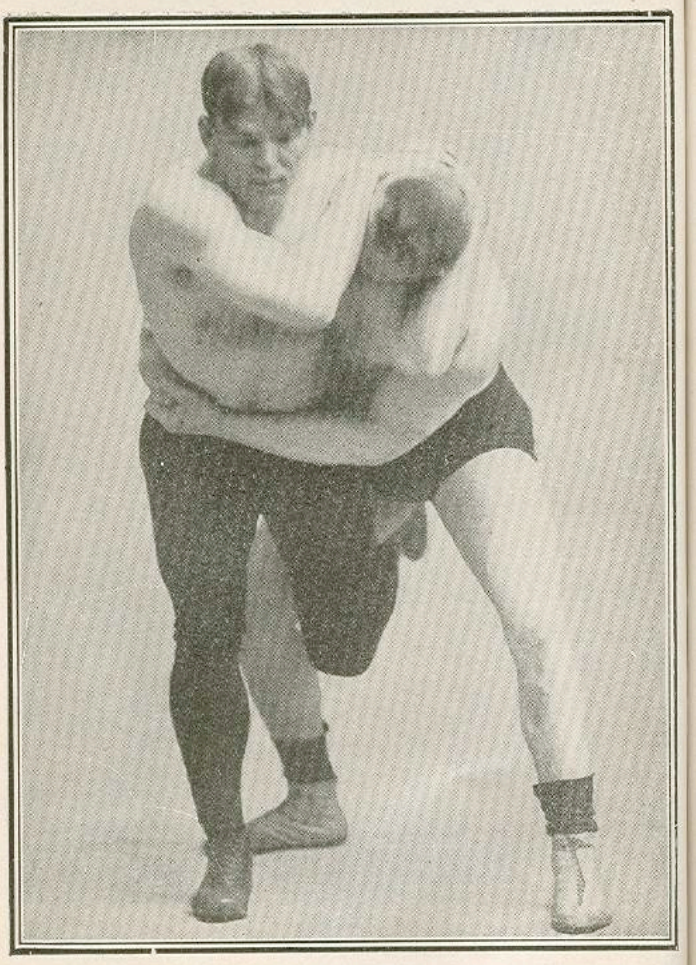
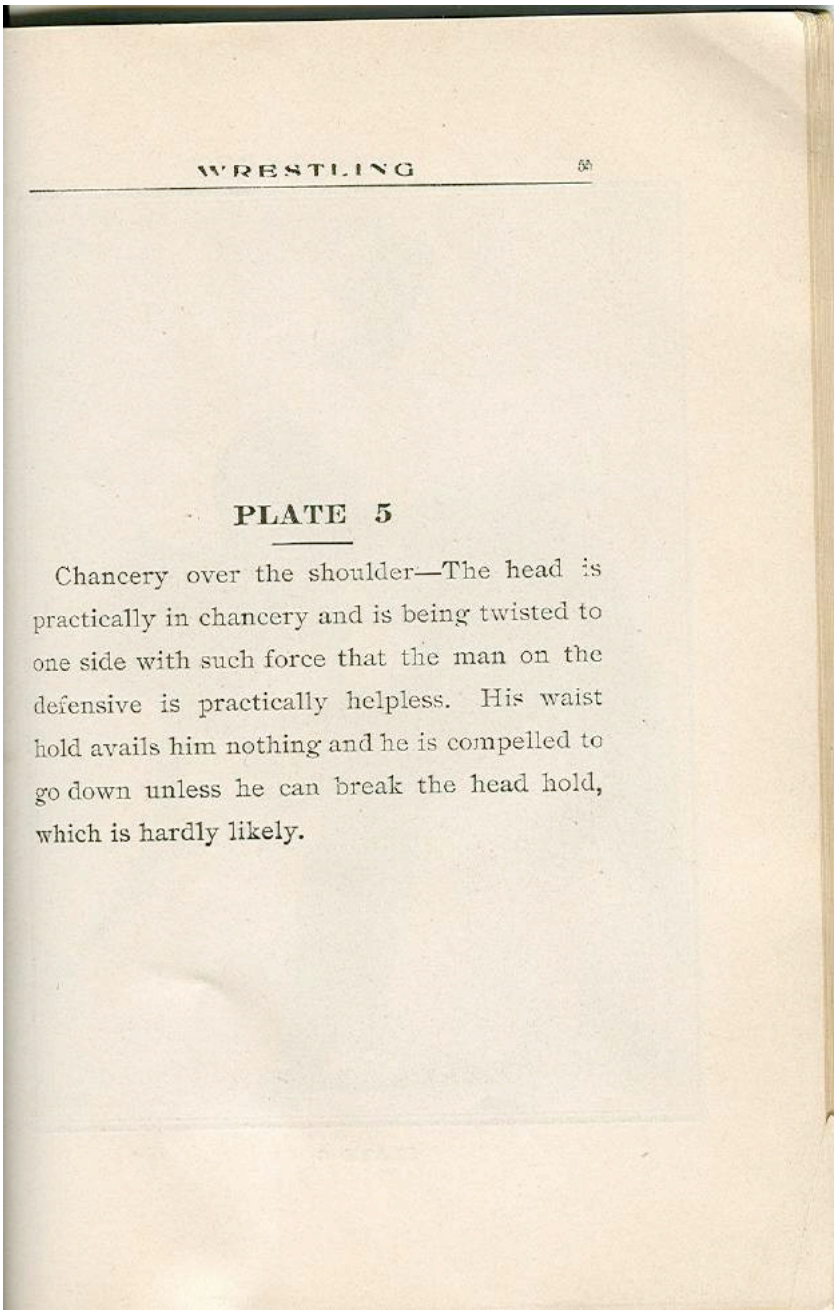


PLATE 5


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## PLATE 5

Chancery over the shoulder—The head is practically in chancery and is being twisted to one side with such force that the man on the defensive is practically helpless. His waist hold avails him nothing and he is compelled to go down unless he can break the head hold, which is hardly likely.

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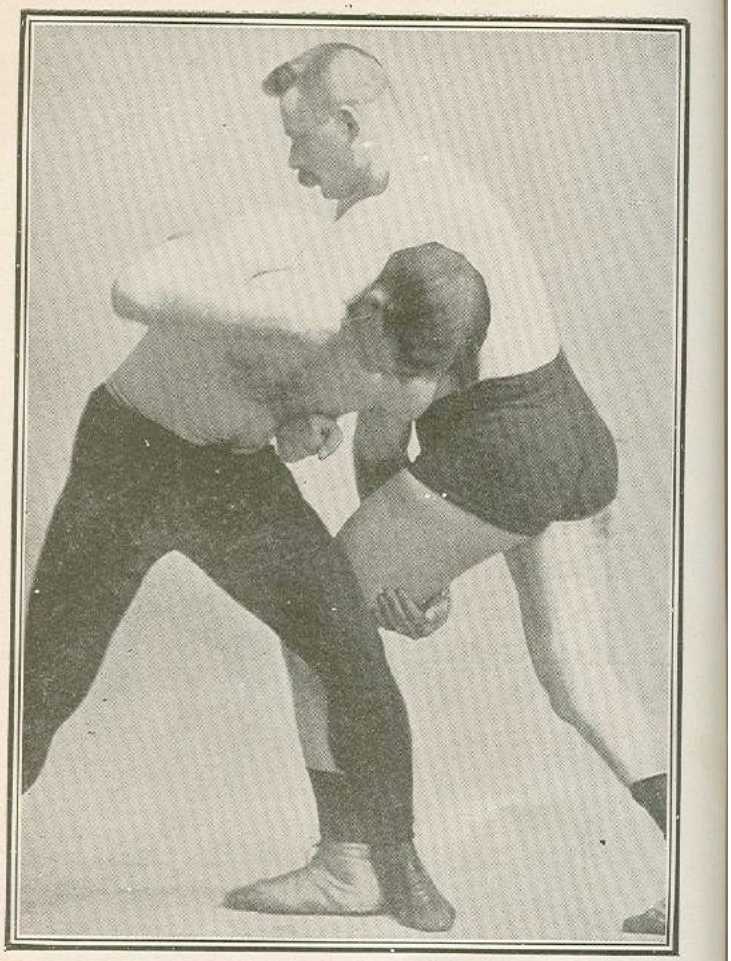


PLATE 6


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## PLATE 6

Arm and leg hold—This is the result of a quick rush, both holds being secured at the same instant. If properly executed a flying fall results. The body is raised by means of the leg hold and your opponent is thrown over your shoulder. The whole movement must be executed rapidly to be effective.

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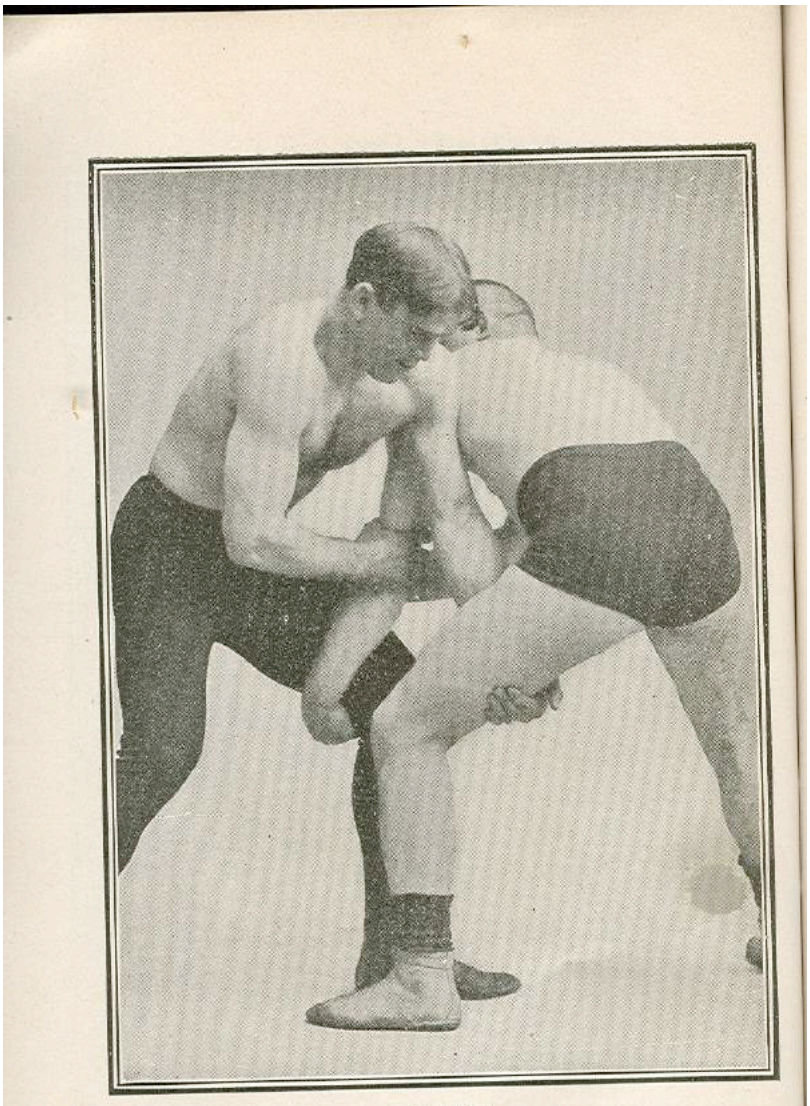


PLATE 7


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## PLATE 7

Block for a leg hold—The man on the left is on the defensive. His opponent has made an attempt to throw him by means of a leg hold, but he has cleverly blocked in the manner shown in the illustration. There is no opportunity for a fall here.

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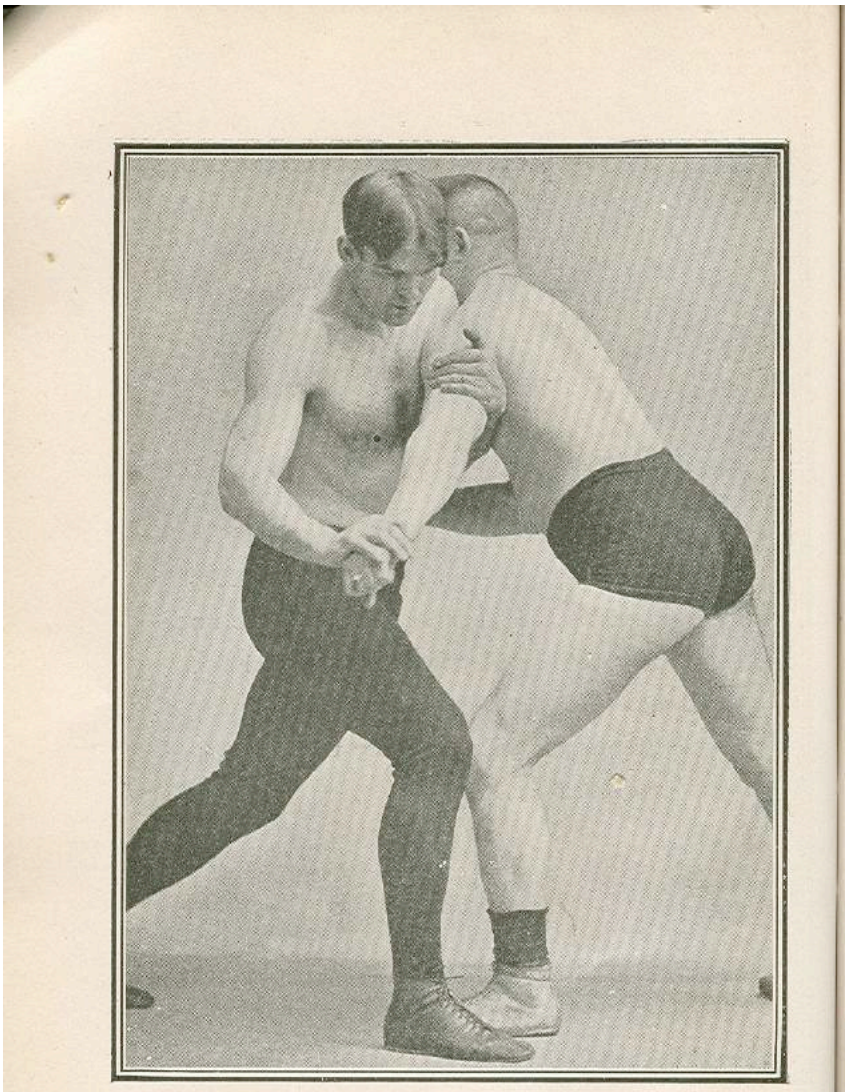


PLATE 8


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## PLATE 8

This is more or less a jiu-jitsu movement, and might be called an arm hold and trip. With the left hand as a lever the arm is forced back by wrist hold, and then a quick trip with the left foot follows. Amateurs should practice this hold with caution else it may result in dislocation of the shoulder.

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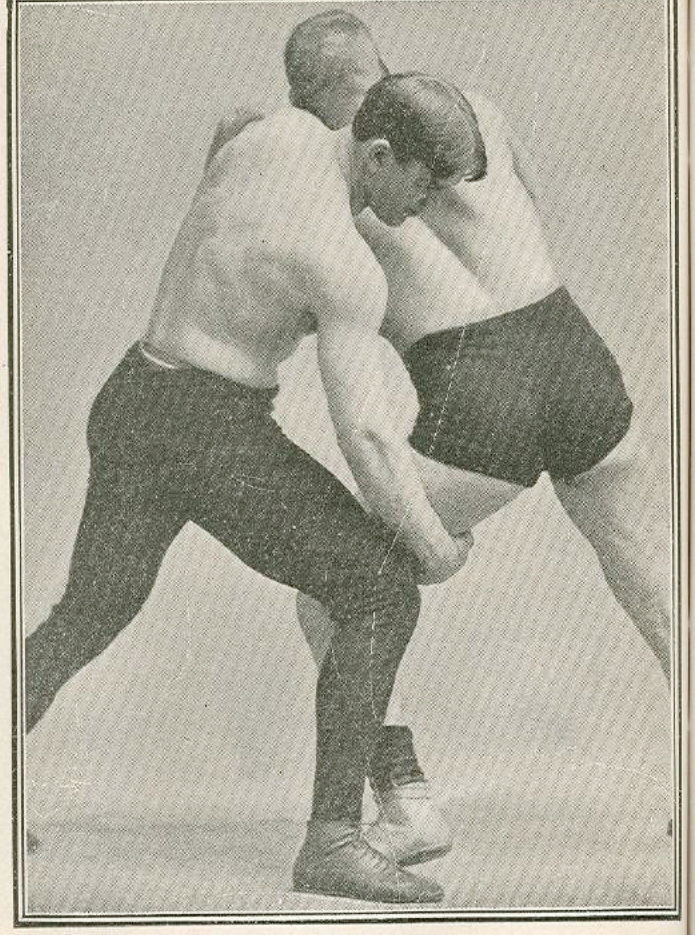
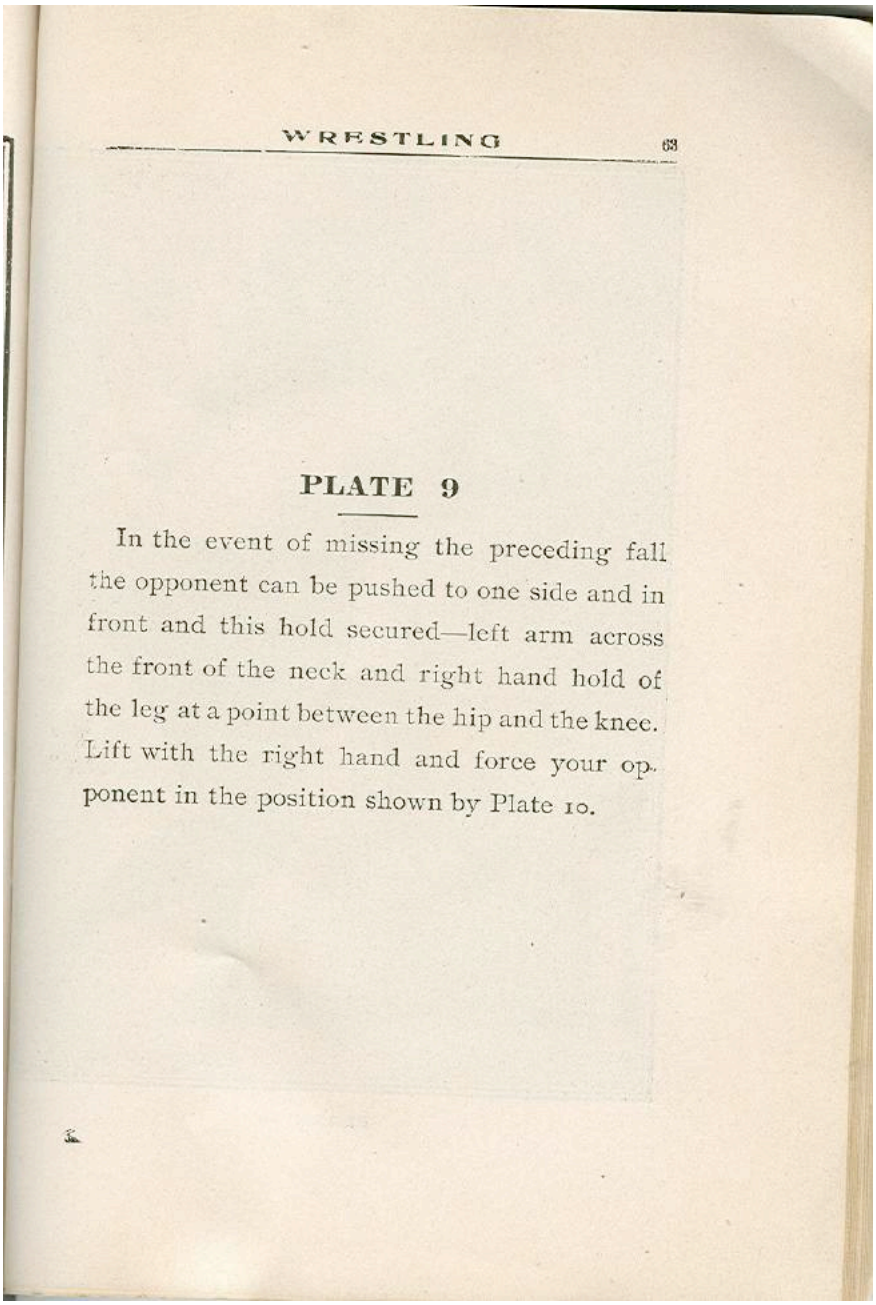


PLATE 9


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## PLATE 9

In the event of missing the preceding fall the opponent can be pushed to one side and in front and this hold secured—left arm across the front of the neck and right hand hold of the leg at a point between the hip and the knee. Lift with the right hand and force your opponent in the position shown by Plate 10.

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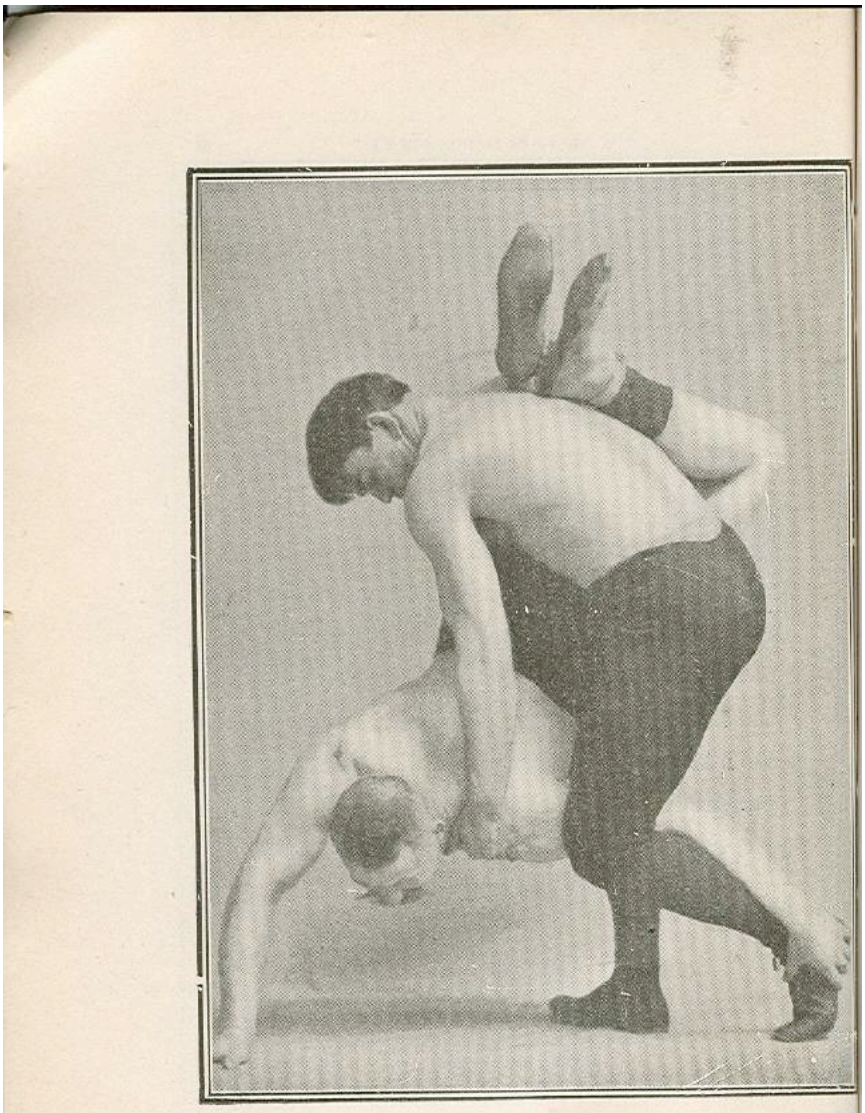


PLATE 10


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## PLATE 10

This is the result of the neck and leg hold. The leg hold is now a crotch hold and the left hand has been slipped to the shoulder while the left arm of the man on the defensive is scissored by the leg. With but one free arm the under man is in a bad way.

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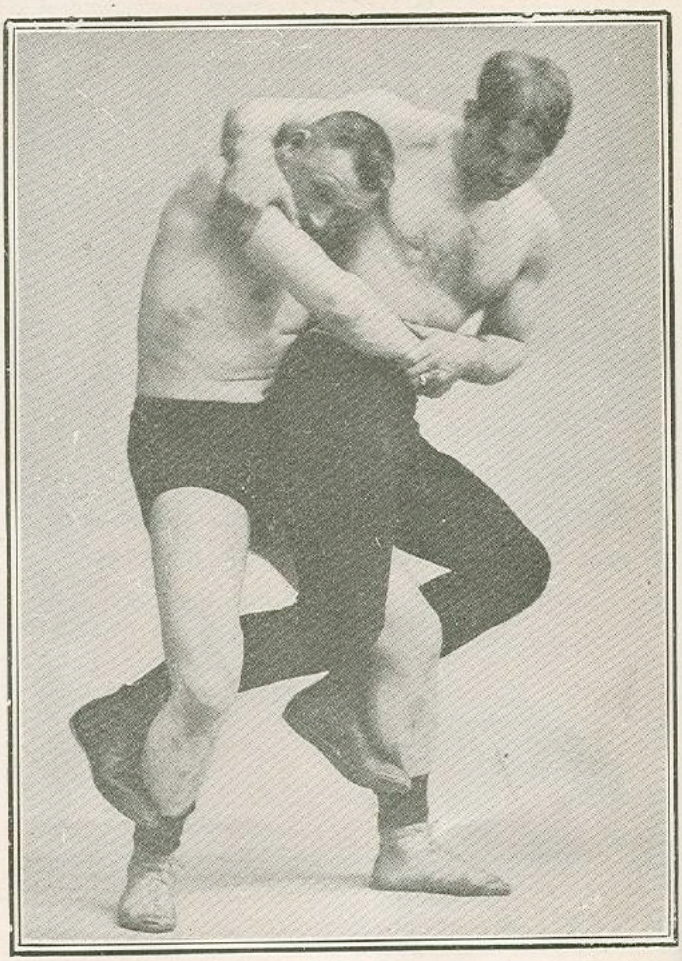


PLATE 11


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## PLATE 11

Block for a body lift—The man at the right has tried for a body lift but his antagonist has used the grapevine with both legs and completely blocked the manoeuvre.

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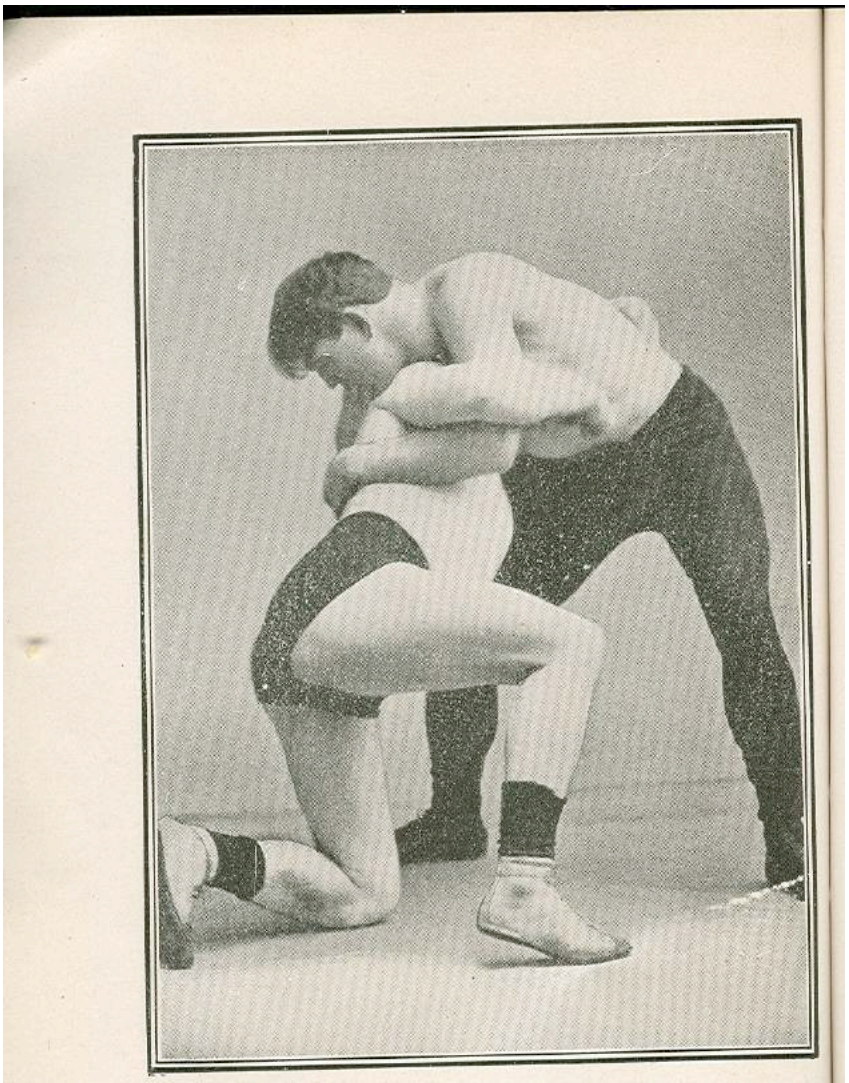


PLATE 12


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## PLATE 12

Chancery and barlock—This hold may be secured from a standing position and a fall is imminent when it is once obtained. The right arm is thrown around the back of the head so the hand will come under the chin, and the left arm is placed under your opponent's right arm so the palm of your hand rests on his back. The following plate gives another view of this movement.

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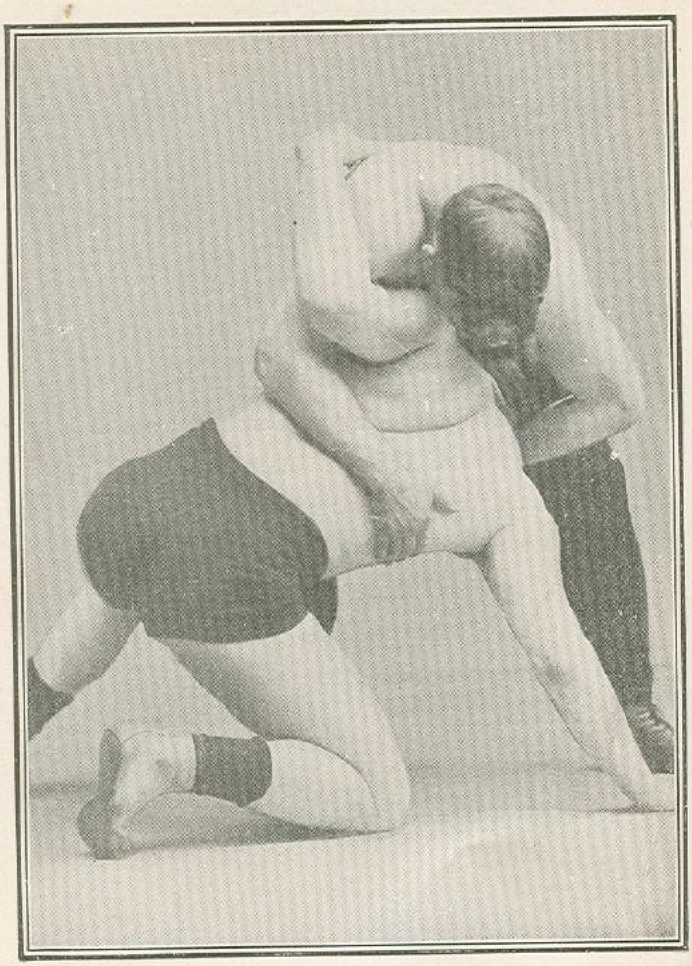


PLATE 13


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## PLATE 13

Chancery and barlock, continued—By twisting your opponent's head and forcing his right shoulder up by your left arm you will bring him to his knees, and although there may be a few moments resistance, the fall is imminent.

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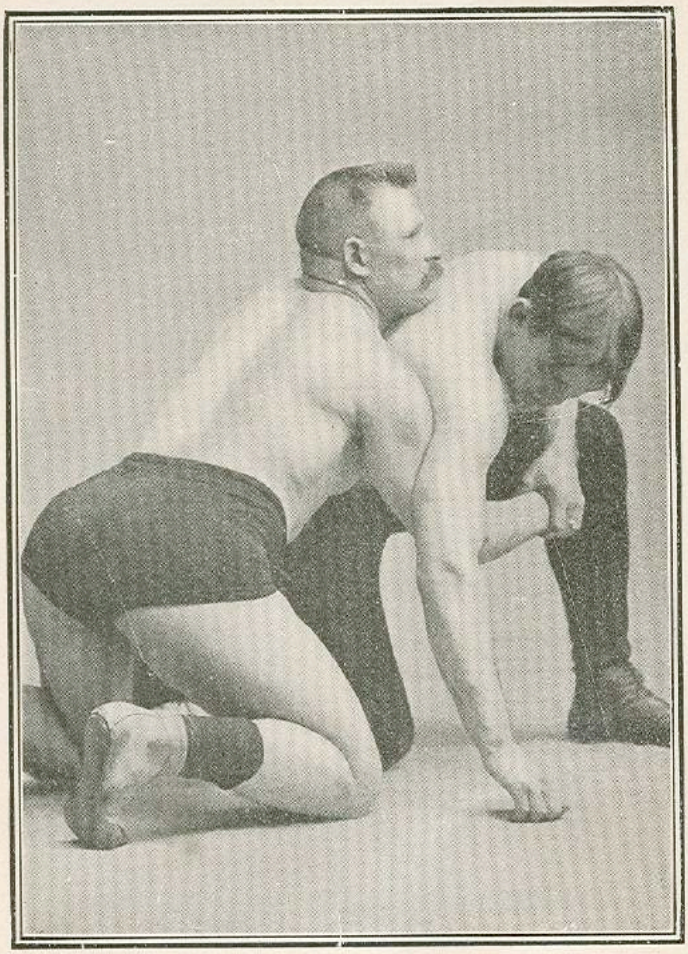


PLATE 14


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## PLATE 14.

Securing an arm lock for a side roll—The man on the right has been on his buttocks with his opponent's arms around his waist. He has twisted out, taken a wrist hold, and is ready to roll the man on his back.

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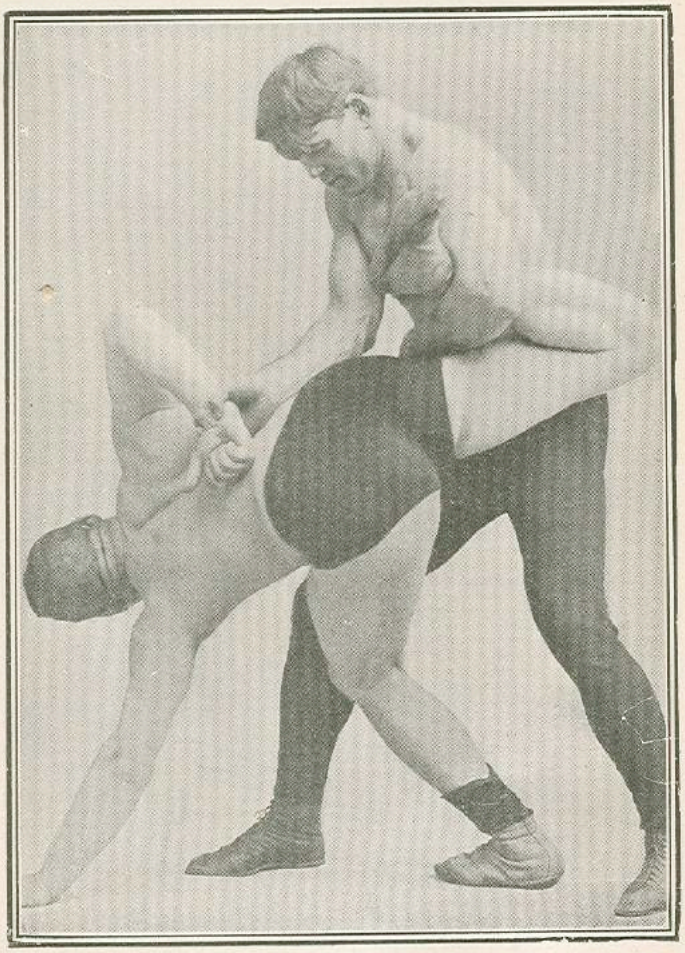


PLATE 15


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## PLATE 15

Hammerlock and leg hold—This is secured while the defensive man was on the mat on his knees. The hammerlock was obtained first, the leg hold followed. A trip with the left foot makes the fall imminent.

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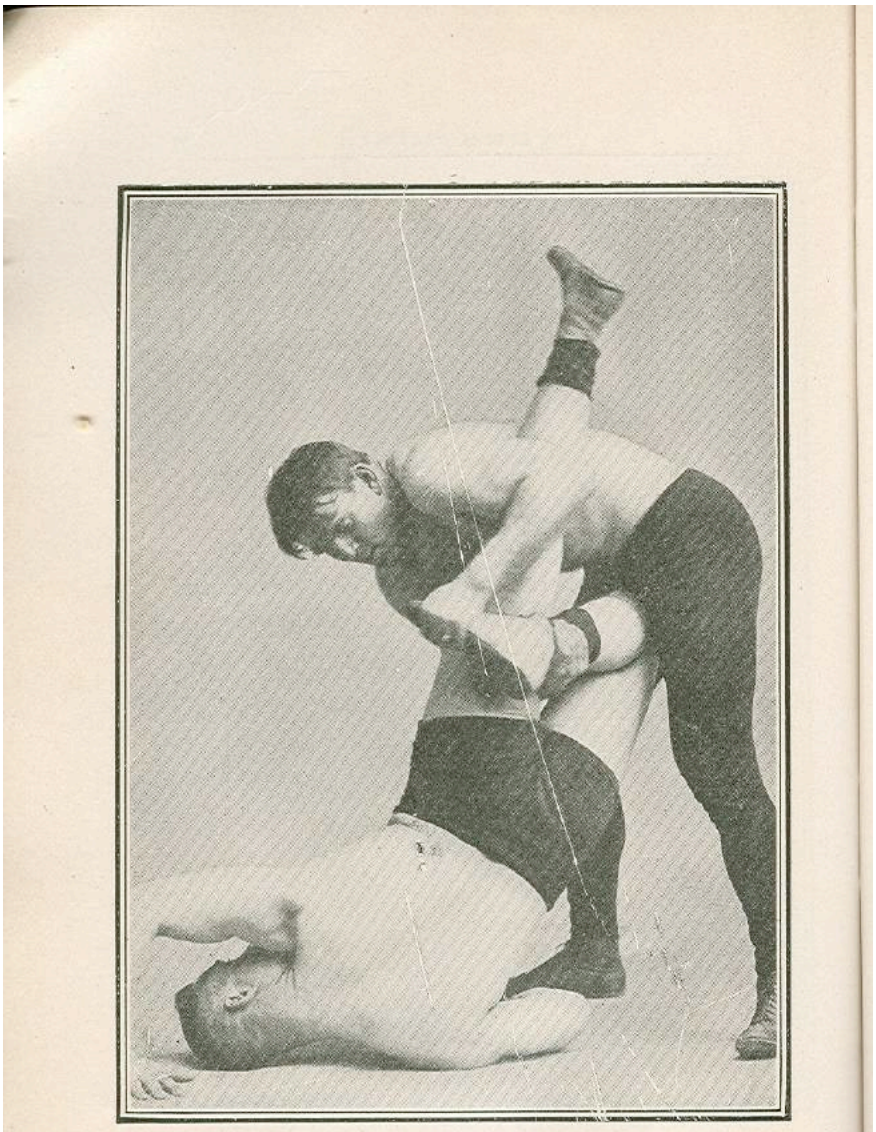


PLATE 16


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## PLATE 16

The famous toe and ankle hold—This hold, secured while the man on the defensive is down on the mat, means a fall within a very short time, because the slightest twisting of the ankle causes the greatest pain. Once this hold is secured many a man will usually submit at once.

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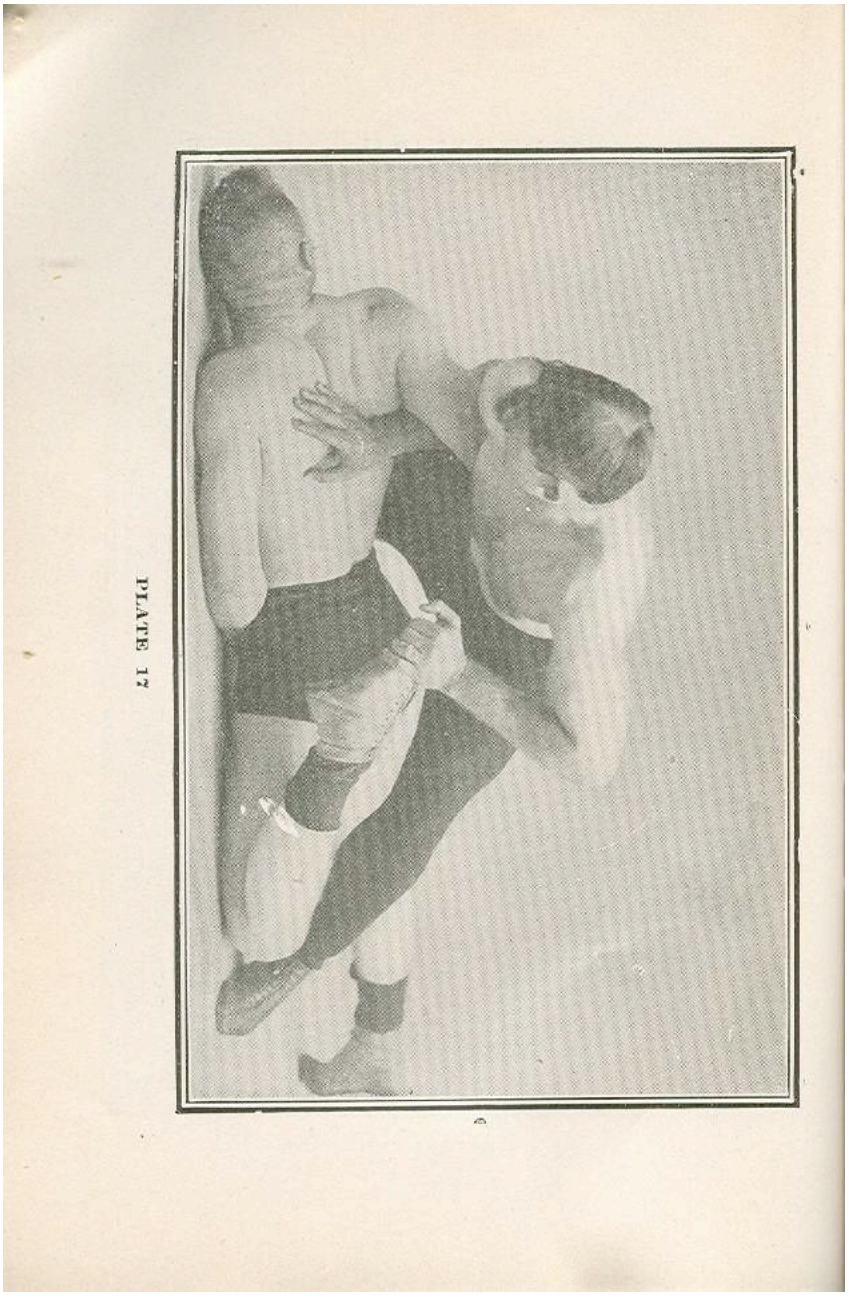
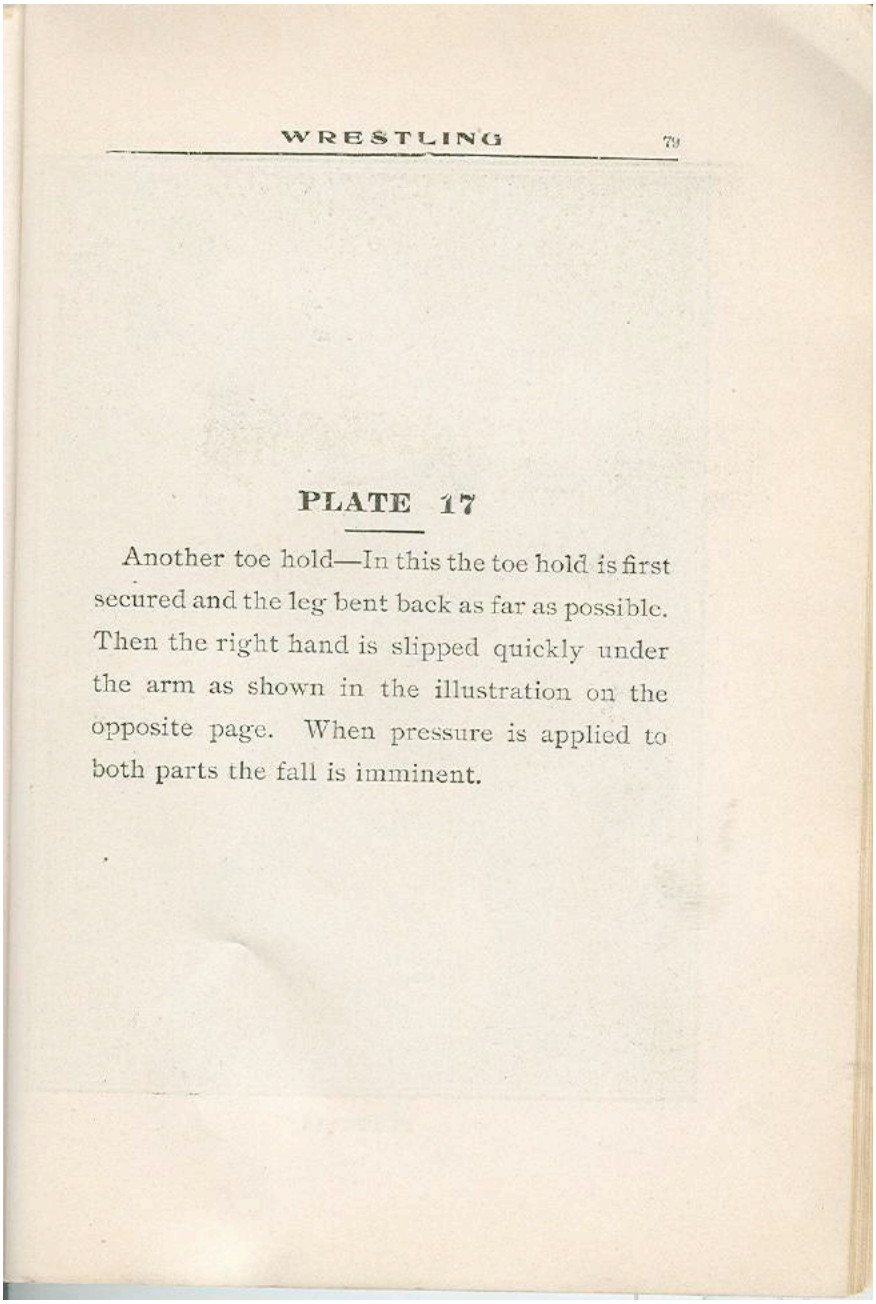


PLATE 17


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## PLATE 17

Another toe hold—In this the toe hold is first secured and the leg bent back as far as possible. Then the right hand is slipped quickly under the arm as shown in the illustration on the opposite page. When pressure is applied to both parts the fall is imminent.

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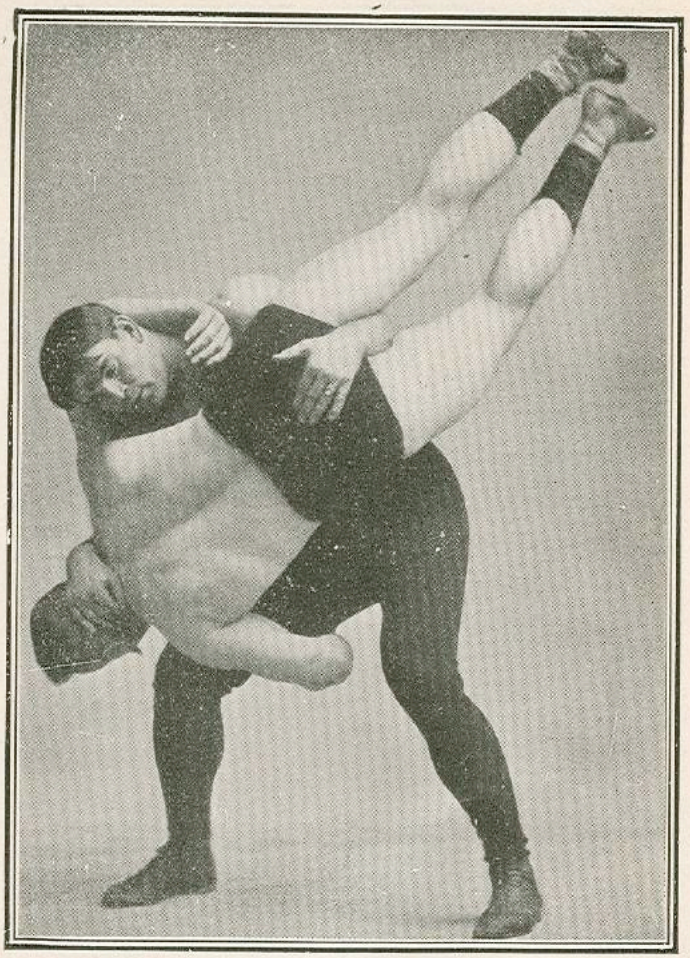


PLATE 18


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## PLATE 18

Here an unusual hold has been obtained from a standing position, the quarter Nelson being secured first, the crotch hold following immediately. It must be performed very quickly, nowever, to prevent a block. The continuation will be seen in the next plate.

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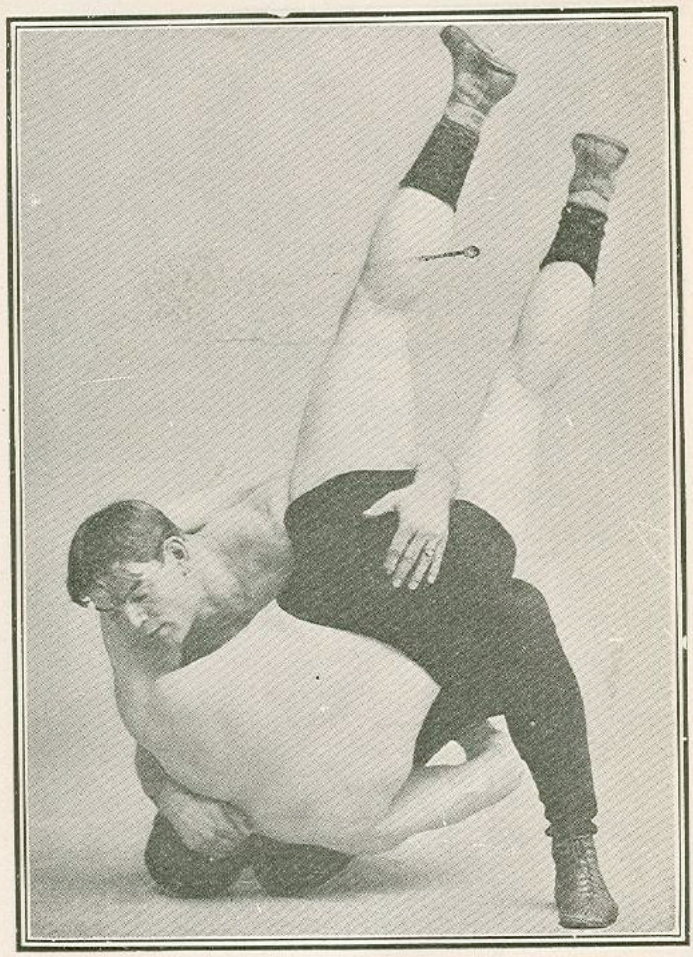


PLATE 19


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## PLATE 19

This shows the fall imminent from the hold exemplified on the preceding page. There is no release for it nor no block, providing the aggressor is strong enough to maintain both his original holds.

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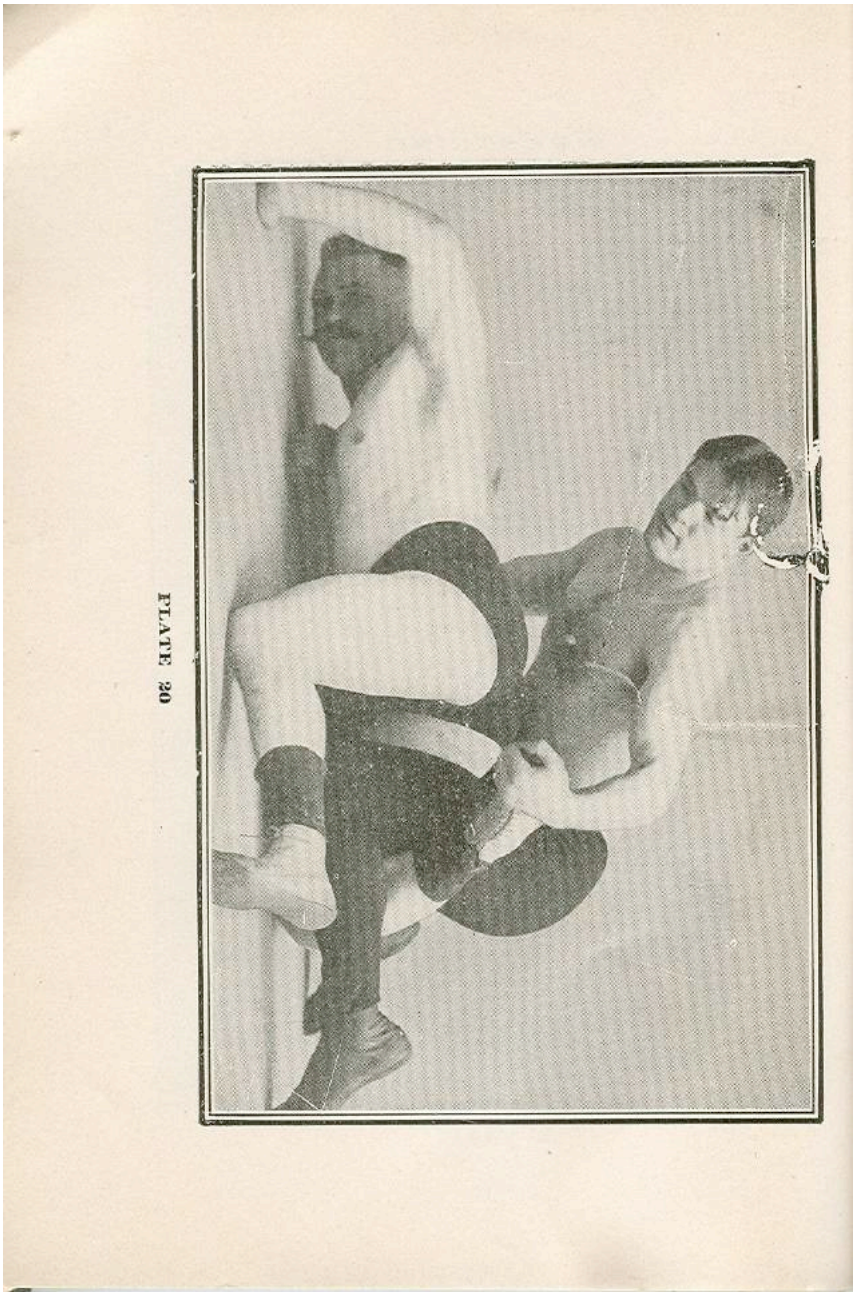


PLATE 20



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## PLATE 20

Toe hold and hammerlock—This shows the beginning of a hold which will end in a fall. The toe hold is first secured, using the leg as a lever. Then with the right hand a hammerlock is forced, pressure being brought to bear all the while upon the foot, which is slightly twisted. The continuation of the movement is shown in the next plate.

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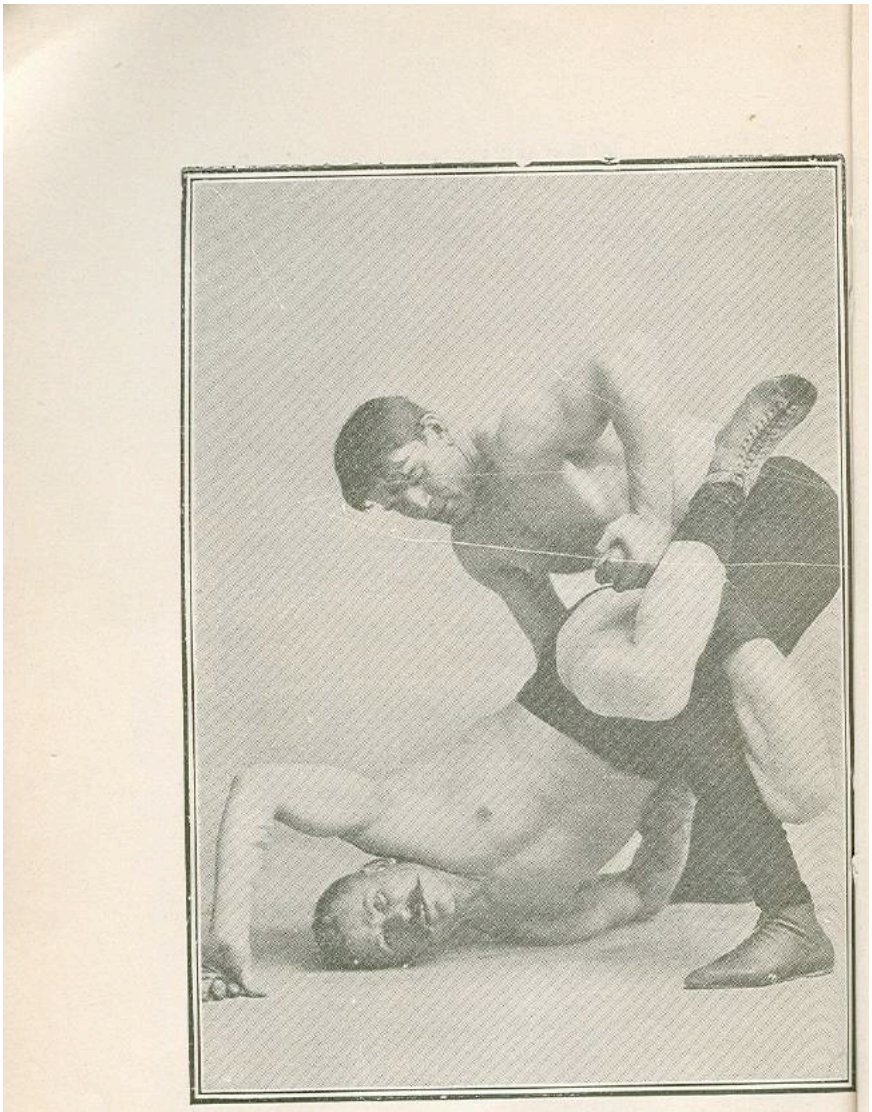


PLATE 21


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## PLATE 21

Toe hold and hammerlock, continued--Here both holds are shown complete, and although a fall does not seem imminent, yet it is only a question of time when the under man must succumb, especially if the proper pressure is brought to bear upon his ankle and toe.

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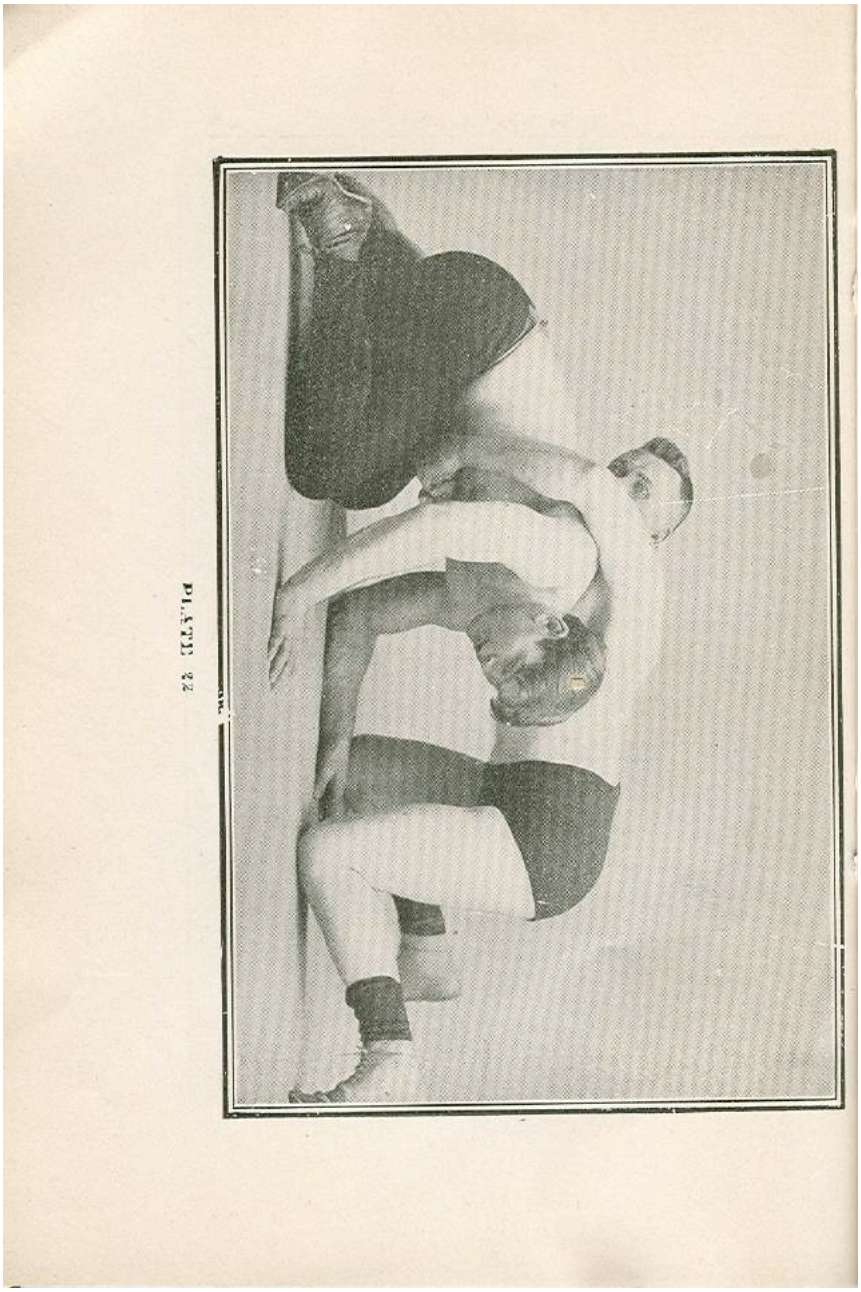


PLATE 82



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## PLATE 22

Counter for body hold—This shows the beginning; the aggressor has obtained a body hold, although it doesn't seem to be of much value. The counter is shown in the following plate.

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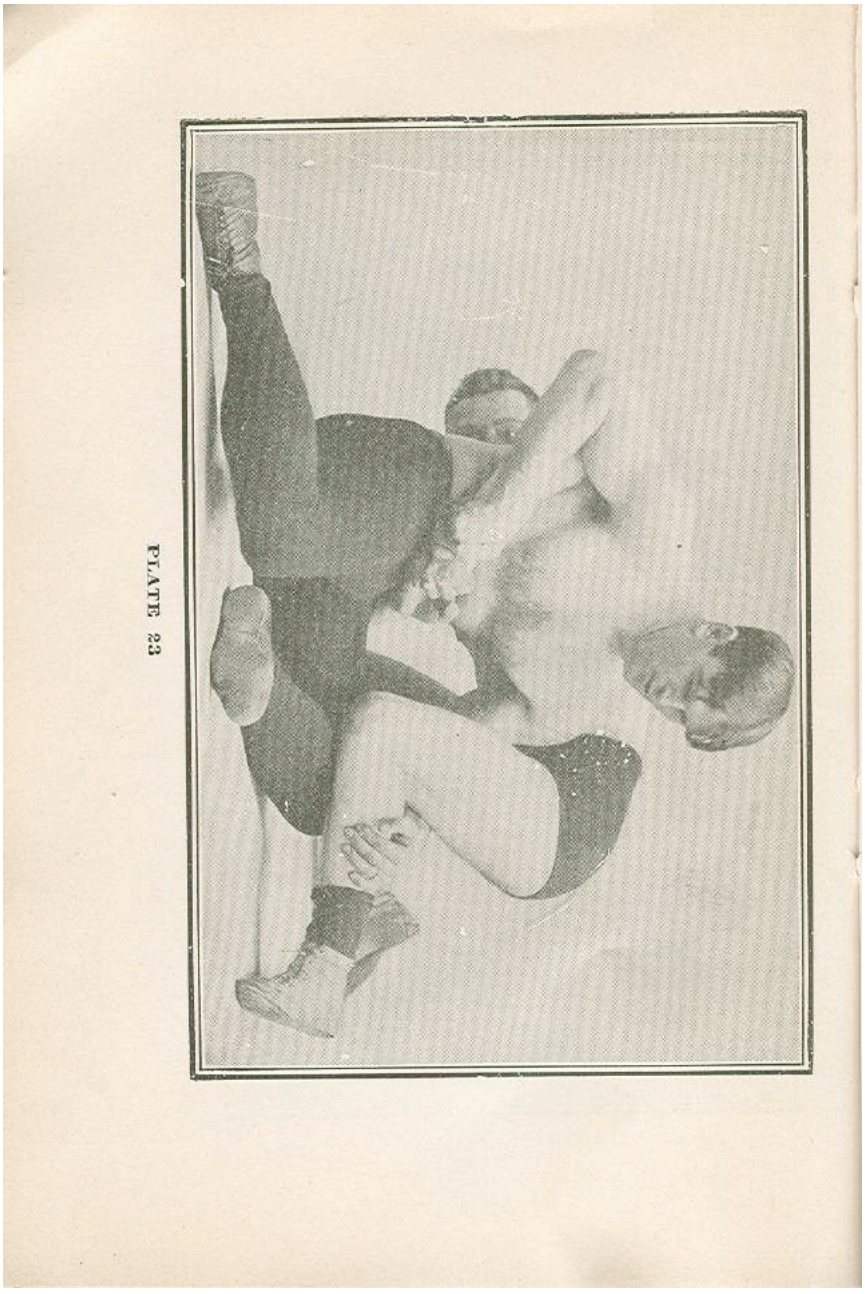


PLATE 23



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## PLATE 23

Counter for body hold—The left hand of the defensive man seizes the left leg of his opponent, as shown by the illustration. He pulls it toward him and slips out to one side, breaking the hold with his right hand. Or, retaining the leg and arm hold and throwing himself backward, he gets a fall.

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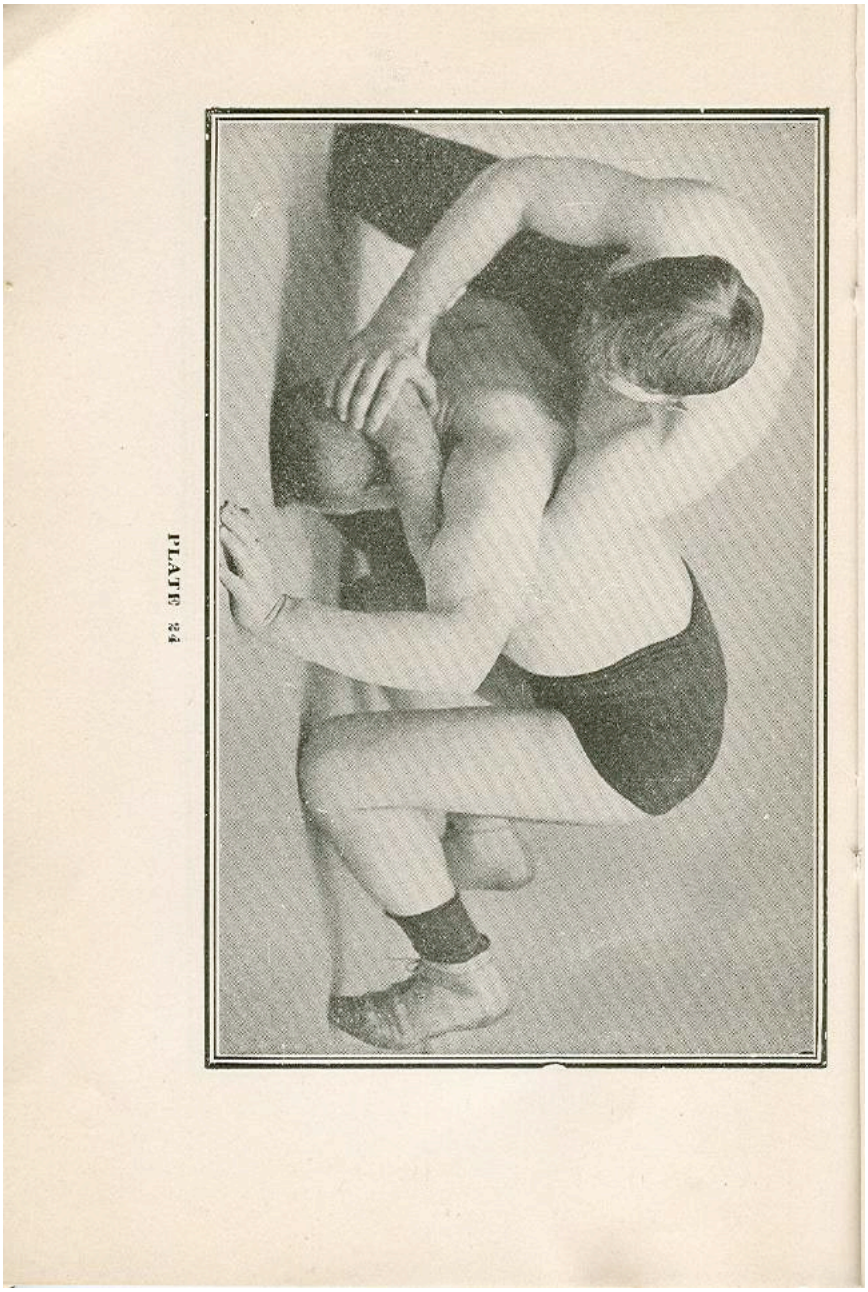
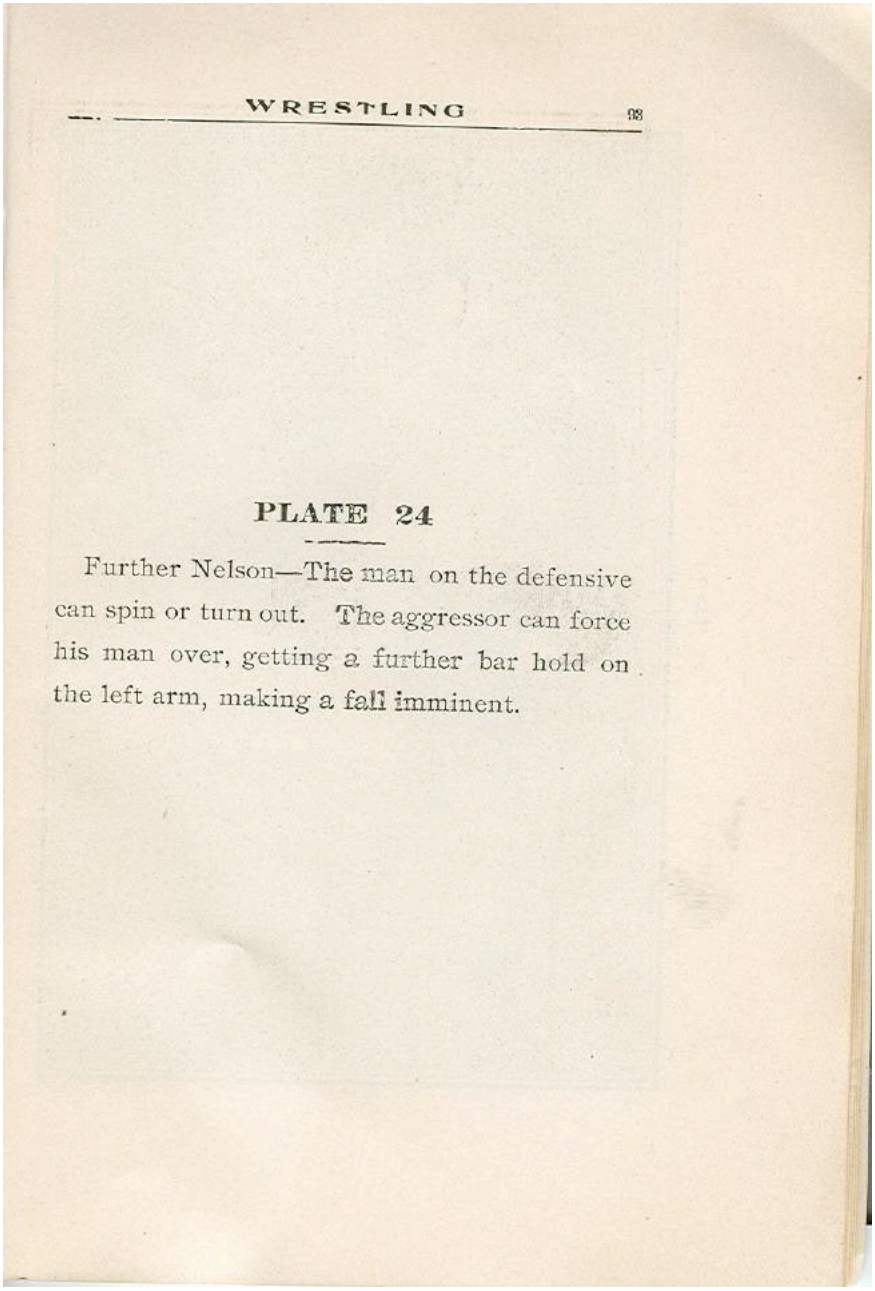


PLATE 24


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## PLATE 24

Further Nelson—The man on the defensive can spin or turn out. The aggressor can force his man over, getting a further bar hold on the left arm, making a fall imminent.

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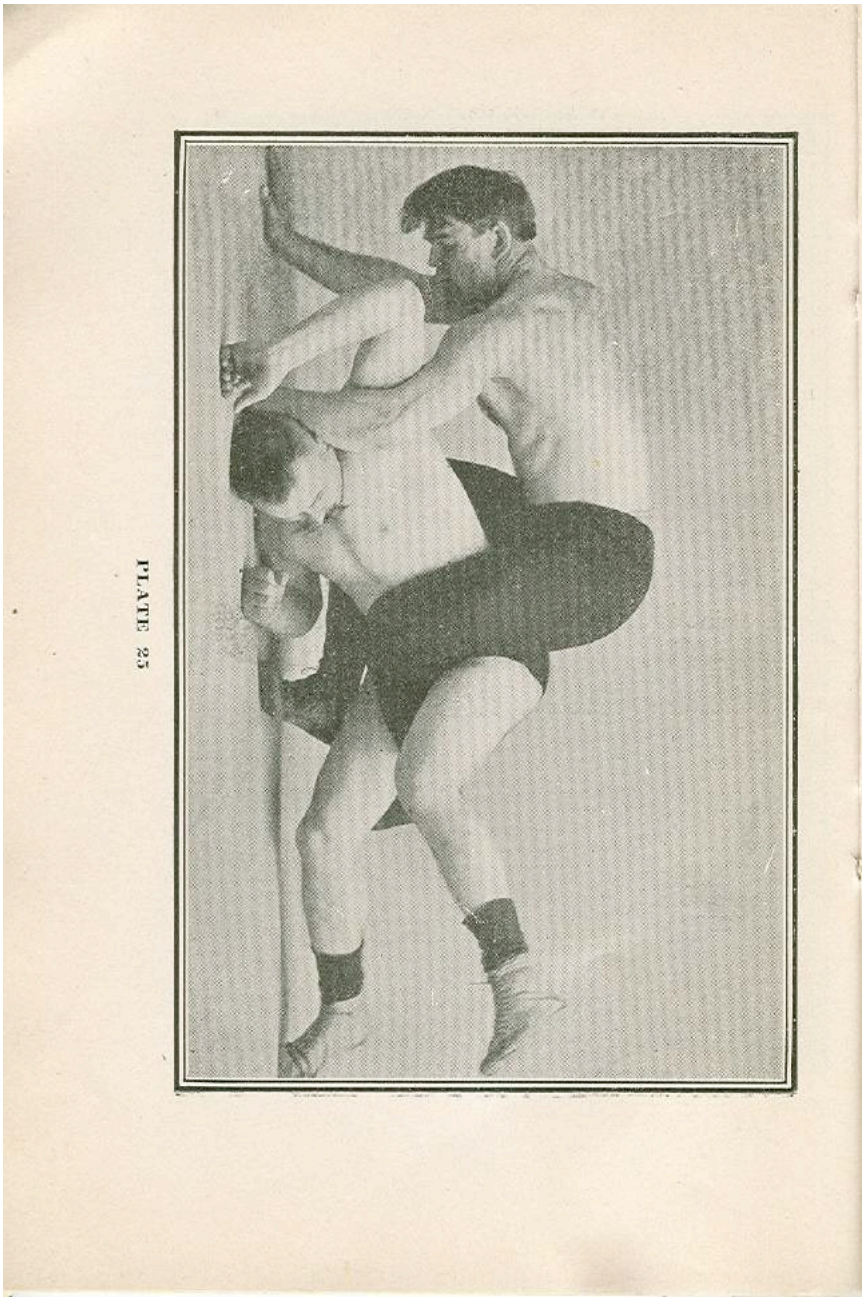


PLATE 25



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## PLATE 25

Half-Nelson and leg grapevine—The left leg should be released from the crotch of the under man, and the scissors hold applied across the stomach. Then the fall is certain.

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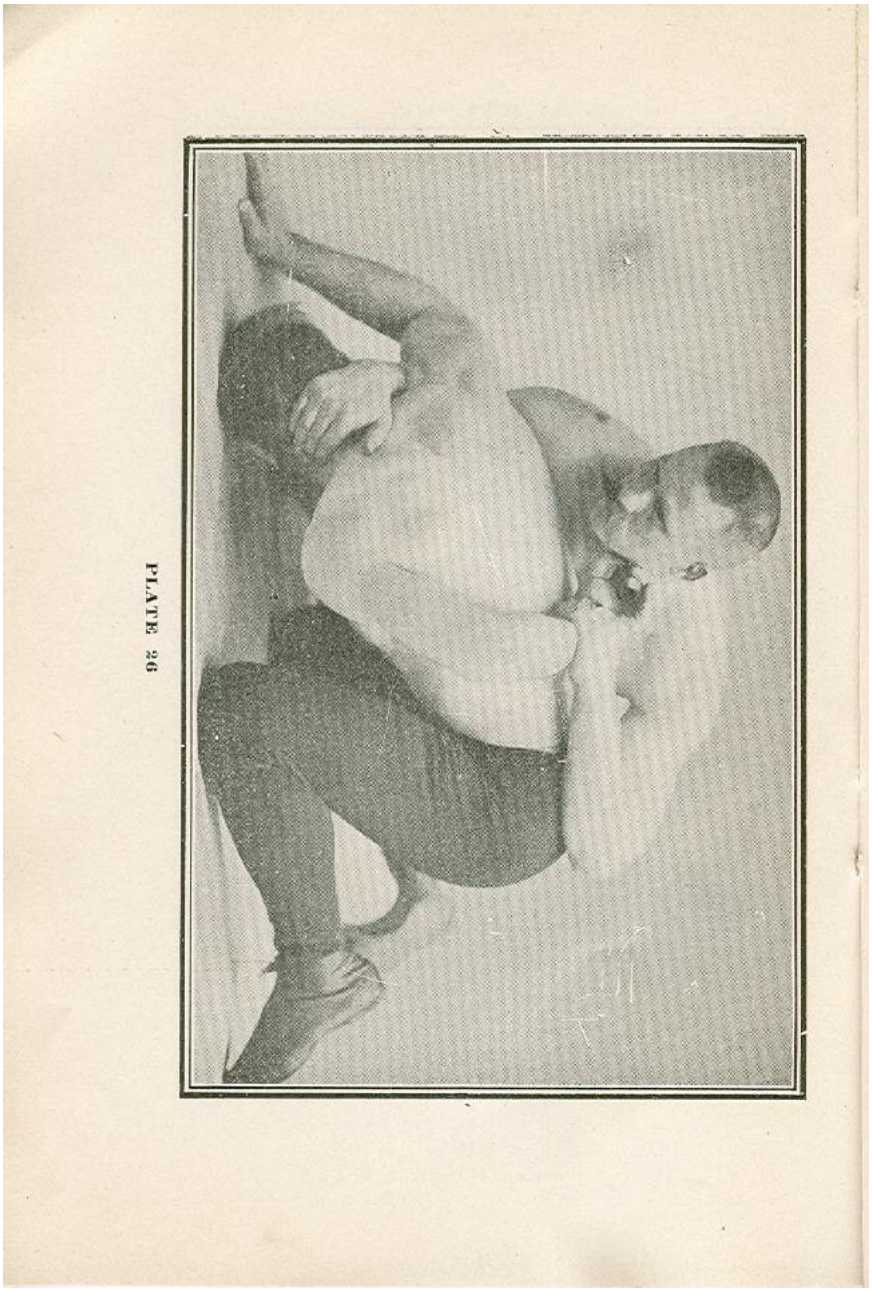


PLATE 26



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## PLATE 26

Half-Nelson and hammerlock—All that is necessary here is to force the arm toward the neck up the back and then throw all weight forward for a fall.

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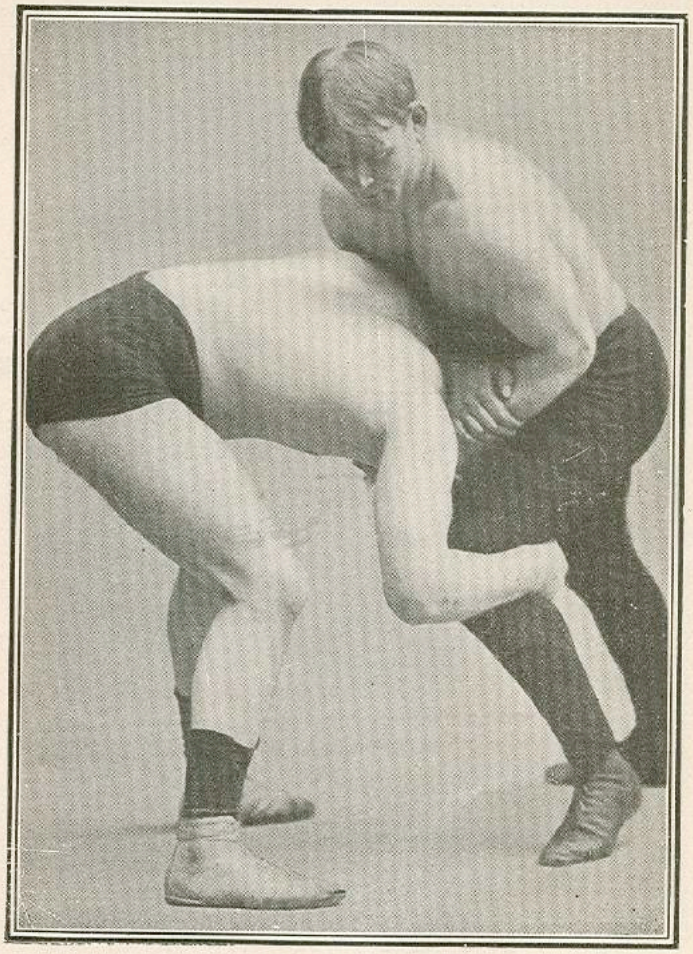


PLATE 27


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## PLATE 27

Forward quarter Nelson—It is possible in this hold for a man to twist his opponent to the floor. The under man shows how far it is possible to block the hold.

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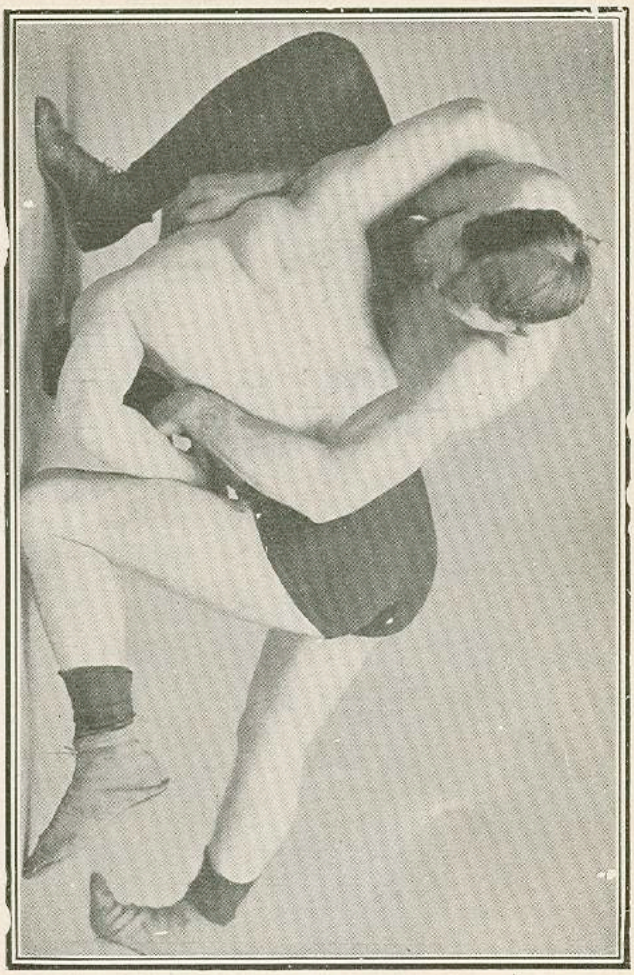


PLATE 28



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## PLATE 28

Half-Nelson with arm and leg—This is the beginning of a scissors hold for the head, and the finish will be shown in the next illustration. The under man is thrown forward, which makes the scissors hold possible.

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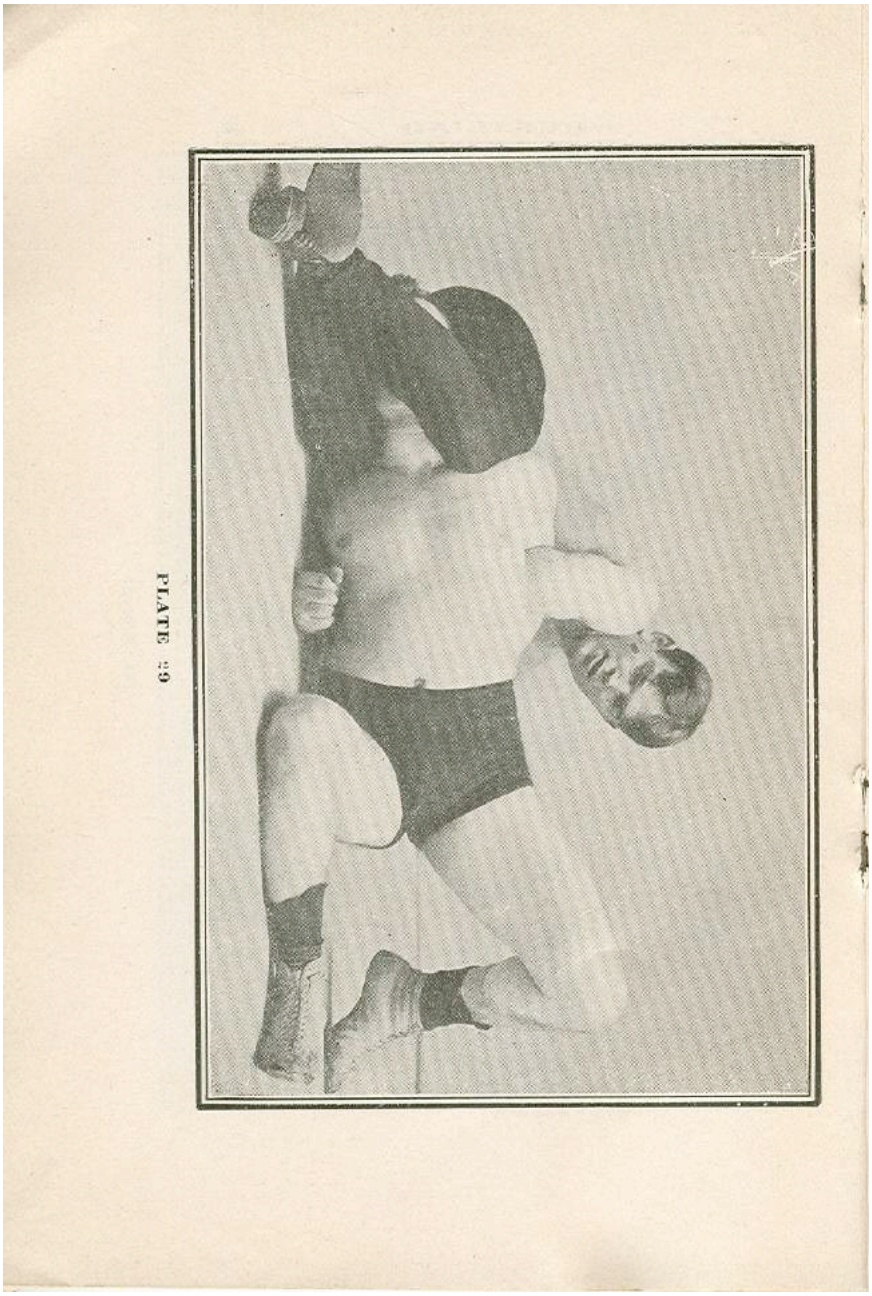


PLATE 29


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## PLATE 29

Scissors hold on head and bar hold—This shows the scissors applied. The next move should be to release the head of the under man and depend on the bar hold for a fall.

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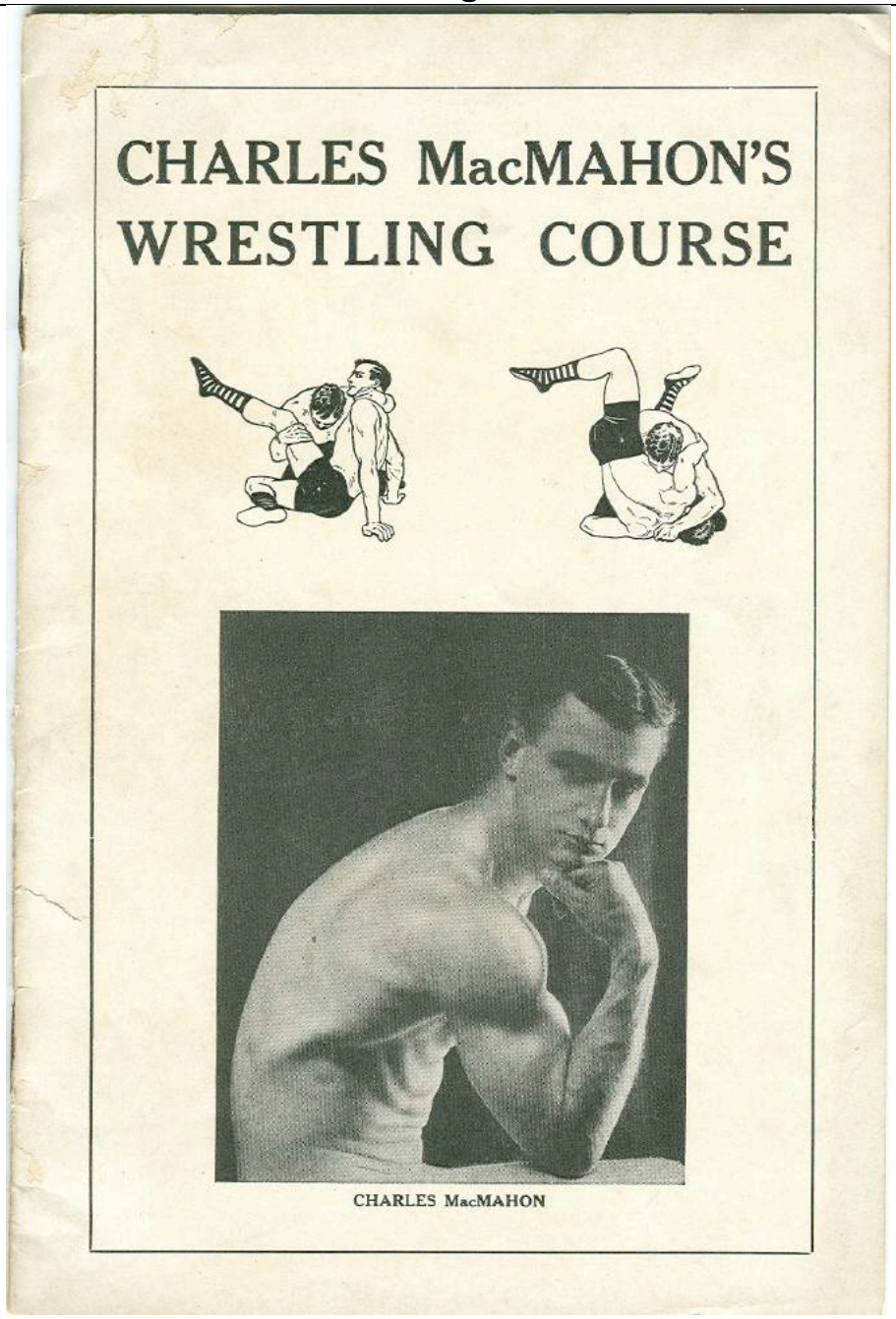
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## Charles MacMahon's Wrestling Course




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# *Foreword*

WRESTLING, like boxing, is an art that every man and boy should have a good practical knowledge of. This is especially true of wrestling, because in a rough and tumble fight (which is the type you are more likely to encounter in your daily life) the knowledge of wrestling is slightly more valuable than boxing. One reason for this is that such fights are without rules which allows the wrestler to get on his opponent any or all the punishing holds he desires. Besides this, it has been more or less proven that a wrestler can conquer a boxer when their respective abilities are equal.

For the beginner and non-professional, wrestling is the most interesting of these two arts. In wrestling, provided both men are nearly alike in weight, one is not so liable to hurt his opponent or get hurt himself as in boxing. Therefore, there is less chance of hard feeling cropping up between friends as there is in boxing.

Wrestling is far more scientific than is generally believed. It is a game of wits and rapid thinking, as well as a game of brawn and speed of movement. Consequently, you must learn to think while on the mat. Practise the numerous holds with your partner until you are never at a loss to know what hold or counter is best in a certain predicament.

Enclosed with your Wrestling Course you will find my Free Booklet, which will give you the details regarding my BODY-BUILDING COURSE. Read it over carefully and remember that four of the essentials a good wrestler must possess are: strength, weight, endurance and speed. My Wrestling Course teaches you the holds, counters, and so forth but only my BODY-BUILDING COURSE can give you these four essentials. You will find an enrollment blank and list of payment plans enclosed and I will deem it a great pleasure to personally build your body into a strong, speedy, magnificant machine. You need my BODY-BUILDIND COURSE NOW and to those enrolling, the price of this Wrestling Course will be deducted from the regular price. In other words, you can, by paying cash, get my Body-building Course for only $21.00, and at the same time retain the Wrestling Course. This reduction holds good on any of the payment plans also.

Wishing you success in your wrestling endeavors, I remain

Yours for Physical Perfection,

Charles MacMahon

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## SPARRING FOR A HOLD

You should first know the few mechanical requirements of the wrestling game. That is, the mat should be twelve feet square, and no ropes are used as in the case of the boxing ring. The mat should not be several inches thick, like those in a gym. These requirements are, of course, only absolutely necessary in professional matches and organized amateur contests. A beginner can learn the holds with a friend just as well on a sandy beach, grassy plot, old rug on the floor, or on the regulation gym mat.

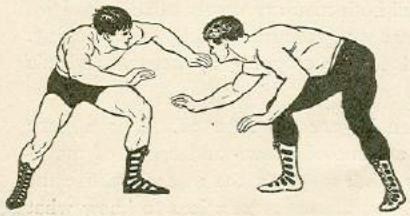


Fig. 1. Sparring for a Hold

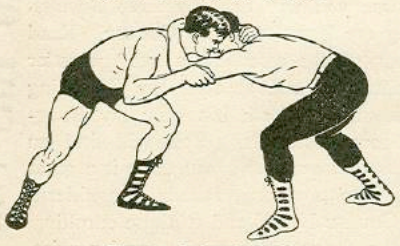


Fig. 2.—Referee's Hold

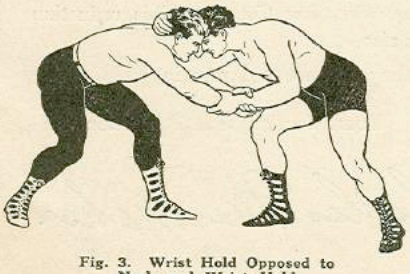


Fig. 3. Wrist Hold Opposed to Neck and Wrist Hold

Gymnasium mats are padded well to prevent injuries and this type is very essential for that purpose. But for an actual wrestling contest, there is too much give to them. This makes it difficult to get a well supported foot hold, and because of the feather-bed qualities makes it difficult to ascertain when a fall is executed. Besides, these rough canvas mats cause what is known as "mat burn" on the knees and elbows of the amateur who does not possess the full-length tights which protect the knees.

Fig. 1 will show the positions taken upon commencing a match. This is, of course, directly after the customary explanation of rules by the referee to the contestants, and the hasty handshake. Every wrestler, to a greater or lesser extent, varies this position when "sparring for a hold." In other words, each wrestler uses a style which gives him what he thinks is the best advantage for getting his favorite hold and fooling his opponent.

Then, as Figs. 2 and 3 illustrate, they come to grips. There are quite a few of these preliminary holds, and while they are essential for a start, they give little advantage to either contestant. While it is easily possible to get a few good holds while standing that may result in a fall, most of the holds are secured while the two men are down on the floor.

The Head Holds, as you will imagine from Figs. 1 and 2, are the easiest to obtain while both men are standing. Certain Leg Holds which will be explained later are also used extensively while in the standing position.

## NELSONS AND COUNTER HOLDS

### THE HALF NELSON

This is one of the best known holds. Fig. 4 will show you how it is secured. However, this hold, as well as most others, is not as easy to get on a man or boy who is your own size, as well as your equal in strength and wrestling ability, as it looks. If our opponent has a strong neck, you will find it difficult to reach under his arm and far enough



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around his neck to enable you to get a good grip on the back of his neck or head. I might add that while this hold is usually obtained on the neck, it is usually more effective if the back of the head is used as the point of leverage instead. One is often compelled to force his adversary's head down by pressing on the back of his head with the hand that is free, before he can get the Half Nelson at all.

Wrestling holds, as a rule, are a matter of applying the principle of leverage. You can see in Fig. 4 how the arm of the man being thrown is used to pry, as it were, the head and neck under. Also notice how the weight of the body is added to the leverage principle in turning the man on his back. Several methods of preventing the effective use of the Half Nelson are shown in Figs. 13, 14, 17 and 18.



Fig. 4. Half Nelson

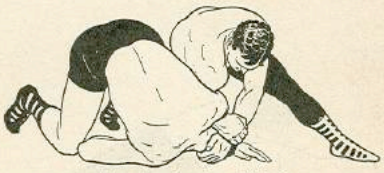


Fig. 5. Quarter Nelson

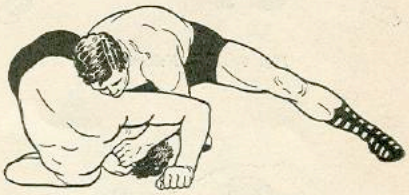


Fig. 6. Three-Quarter Nelson

### QUARTER NELSON

Now when you get up against a fellow who has the exceptionally strong neck mentioned in a preceding paragraph and find you cannot get a Half Nelson on him, you then resort to the Quarter Nelson. Fig. 5 shows that this method enables you to get the same effect when the Half Nelson is out of the question. The only disadvantage of this hold is that you do not have a free hand, as in the Half Nelson, to get a combination hold with. A break against this hold is shown in Fig. 15.

### THREE-QUARTER NELSON

This hold is in reality a re-enforced Half Nelson. It is doubly powerful because the hands are locked, which prevents slipping as is likely in the Half Nelson, and the power of both arms can be used in pulling the head under.

The weight of the upper man's body is also in a better position with this hold to both turn his opponent's body over on the back and keep him there. Whereas, in the Half Nelson, as you will see by looking at Fig. 4, the upper man's body is further over, which makes it easier for the under man to send the upper man all the way over and into no position to pin the under man's shoulders down. As a Rolling Fall does not count in a regulation match, the Three-Quarter Nelson has an advantage over the Half Nelson. A counter for the Three-Quarter Nelson is shown in Fig. 16.

### FULL NELSON

This hold (often called the Double Nelson) is really a combination of the Half Nelson and Far Half Nelson (Fig. 8). I wish to call your attention to the particular method of locking the hands or fingers, as it were, in the illustration of the Full Nelson. This lock is considered the most difficult to break. Notice that the hands are placed palms togethed and the four fingers of each hand interlocked.

In this Full Nelson Hold, you can see that your man must be thrown almost straight over his head instead of to the side, as in the Half Nelson. This hold, generally speaking, is more difficult to




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get than even the Half Nelson. Always remember with an opponent your equal, most holds are obtained by quickness and outwitting your man than by sheer strength. If you can catch your man off guard for a certain hold, you have much more chance of catching it. Try to fool him by feinting for a hold you don't want.

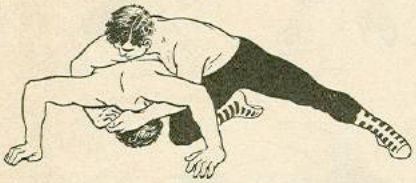


Fig. 7. Full Nelson

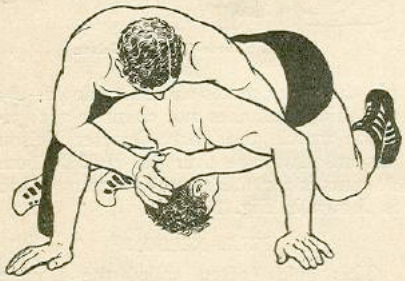


Fig. 8. Far Nelson

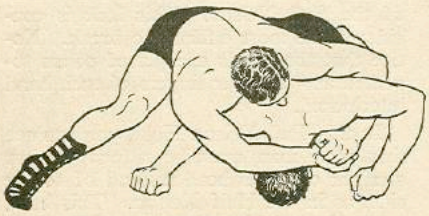


Fig. 9. Bar Nelson

### FAR NELSON

The Far Nelson (often called the Further Nelson) is simply a Half Nelson obtained under the arm of your opponent that is farthest away from you. Fig. 8 shows the Far Nelson with the other hand (which is used in getting the Half Nelson) used to re-enforce the hold. You will see that in this case your man is turned toward and under you instead of away.

### BAR NELSON

This one is a variation of Fig. 8, and gives slightly more force against the head. Besides, the bone of the forearm is not so comfortable as the hands are on the head or neck, as in Fig. 8.

### LOCKED QUARTER

This, as can be plainly seen, is simply a variation of the regular Three-Quarter Nelson. The head is placed at the arm pit for the purpose of making the pull on the neck more effective. It gives a purchase, or, in other words, something to pull against and aids in pushing the body over on its back.

### LEG NELSON

This hold is possible, but is rarely obtained because it is extremely difficult to get. I might state here that a beginner should learn to use his legs as handily as his arms. The reason for this is that the leg are so powerful compared with the arms that when good leg holds are secured, your opponent is often powerless to break them. However, there are more practical leg holds further along in this course which will be discussed when we come to them.

In Fig. 12, you will see the Reversed Further Nelson. This is used for the purpose of bearing your man down to mat and punishing his neck. When you get his head near enough to the floor, it is an easy matter to make him somersault over onto his back. You must learn to follow up your man very quickly. If the change of position of your opponent as he goes over on his back makes it necessary to change holds, do it quickly, or you will be too late.



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## COUNTERS AGAINST NELSONS

### HALF NELSON BLOCK

No one should be satisfied with merely learning holds. Besides the importance of learning to get all holds rapidly and effectively, the importance of learning at least one counter, break or block must not be overlooked. You can rest assured that you are not always going to be on top or on the offensive and, therefore, you must learn to be a good defensive man as well.

You can easily see by looking at Fig. 13 how difficult it is to get a good Half Nelson when a man pulls your elbow in and down while holding his head up and back as far as he possibly can. With your opponent in this position, you will soon find that your arm is too short to reach.

### HALF NELSON BREAK

A Block is preventing your opponent from getting a certain hold. A break is naturally performed after a certain hold is secured. Therefore, Fig. 14 shows one way to break a Half Nelson after it has been fastened on you.

You can see that by gripping the calf of your leg, you can pull your shoulder down and if you raise your head at the same time, your opponent's hold is broken. When you grip your calf or ankle, the foreleg must be at right angles to your arm. Otherwise, it will not be a comfortable position for this arm and naturally cause you to lose force in this break.

Breaks are all right to use at times, but it is often easier to spin out of a hold by going quickly with it. The idea is this: if your opponent has a Nelson of any kind on you, he is naturally trying to force you over in one direction. If you were to hold against him for an instant and then very rapidly change and go in the direction he is trying to force you, he then no longer has a good hold on you; that is, providing you go faster in that direction than he. In other words, beat him to it.

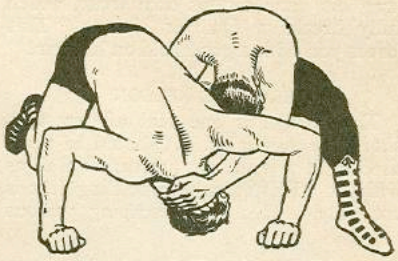


Fig. 10. Locked Three-Quarter Nelson

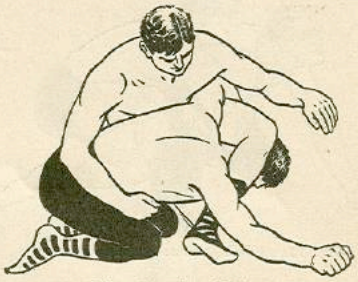


Fig. 11. Leg Nelson

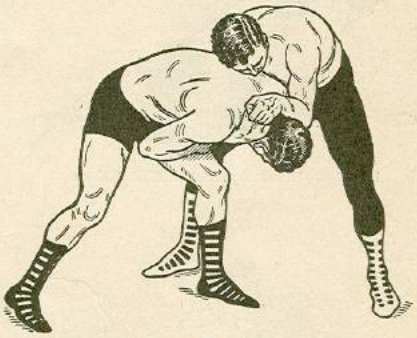


Fig. 12. Reversed Farther Nelson

### QUARTER NELSON BREAK

In Fig. 15, you will see the great power you can apply for the purpose of tearing your opponent's hold apart. By the combined force of both arms, you can





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drag his hand off his own wrist, which fully breaks a Quarter Nelson. This leaves you with a good hold on his arm.

### BRIDGING NELSON

The Bridge is one feat all wrestlers should be master of. It should be practised with a wrestling partner as well as without. This valuable wrestling feat is not only a means of escaping various head and neck holds, but is also a great neck exercise. In practising the Bridge alone, learn to go over from a head stand. In other words, put your head on the mat and your hands near your ears. Then throw the feet up and over, landing on our feet, and hold the Bridge position without letting your back touch the floor. Later you can perform it without the use of your hands at any time.

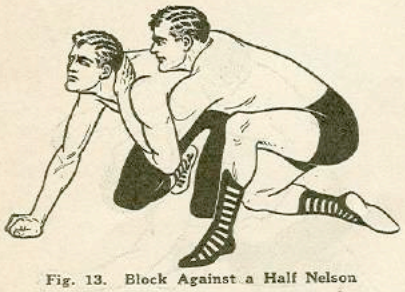


Fig. 13. Block Against a Half Nelson

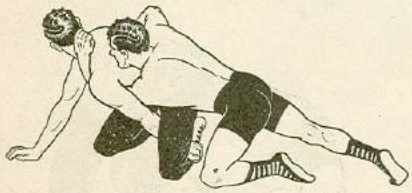


Fig. 14. Break Against a Half Nelson

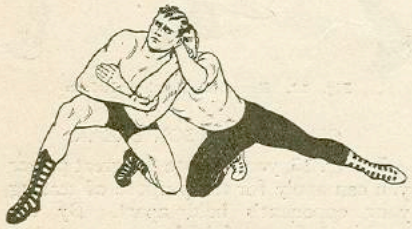


Fig. 15. Breaking a Quarter Nelson

In Fig. 16, you will see how the Bridge is used in preventing a fall from a Quarter Nelson. Now look back at Fig. 6. You will see that the man being thrown in this case is not trying for a bridge and, consequently, is heading his shoulders for the mat. If you decide to Bridge a Nelson, you should start earlier than the position shown in Fig. 6.

Going back to Fig. 16, you will notice how the bridging wrestler has gripped his opponent as an aid. The upper man will try to force the Bridge down, but this is almost impossible as any good wrestler can easily support this extra weight However, the object of the Bridge is not to remain in this position indefinitely, but mainly to give the wrestler an opportunity to escape by twisting out of a hold.

### HEAD SPIN

This escape, Fig. 17, is a good illustration of how the bridge is commenced. But in this Head Spin, the wrestler spins on his head while in the upright position and by a push around with his hands. Of course, the turn is only a half turn which brings, as you will see, the thrown man down on his knees or chest instead of his back. When you become master of the Head Spin and Bridge, you will find them great preservers of your strength and better than always pitting your energy directly against your opponent's.

### SIDE ROLL

In Fig. 18, you will see the Side Roll and Leg Trip. The Side Roll can be performed without the trip, but it is more effective with it because it prevents the top man from throwing his leg fur-



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ther to the side which would place him in a position to counteract the Side Roll.

The Side Roll is manipulated by gripping your opponent's arm as shown and then by drawing that arm under until he is on his back. This must be done with snap. It is, however, almost impossible to get a fall from this hold alone. So when you get him on his back, turn quickly upon his chest and get one or the other of the holds mentioned later on in the course as, for instance, Figs. 65 and 74.

## CHANCERY HOLDS

This class of holds, as the illustrations will prove, are holds in which the arms are wrapped in various ways around parts of the body, mainly the neck.

Fig. 19 shows the Standing Side Chancery Hold, often termed the Head Lock. You will notice that the Finger Lock mentioned in an early paragraph is not used in the hold. This is because the Wrist Hold shown shortens up on the arms and, therefore, makes it possible to tighten up more on the neck. As this is one of what is known as a "punishing hold," it is important that you get all the pressure you can on your opponent's neck. Besides being difficult to escape from its punishing qualities, it has a tendency to sap the energy of its victim. This is a very good hold to try for at the beginning of a match, for it is more easily obtained in a standing position than in any other.

In turning your man over onto his back on the floor, it is best to trip him, as it were, over your leg or hip. In Fig. 20, the wrestler with the black tights has the same hold which was on him in Fig. 19. Of course, after you throw your man over your leg as shown, you fall as hard as possible upon him, retaining the Head Chancery.

In regards to falling hard upon your adversary, I might mention that in professional wrestling, and for that matter in organized amateur matches, the wrestlers actually try to punish or hurt each other in almost any way except actually punching and using the Strangle Hold, which is always barred. A wrestler has often been compelled to give into a fall



Fig. 16. Bridging a Quarter Nelson

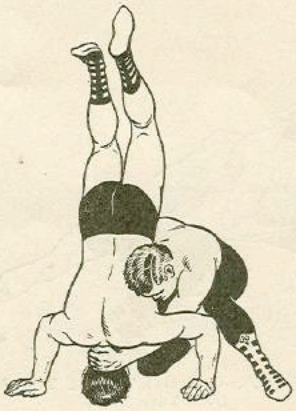


Fig. 17. Head Spin Out of a Half Nelson

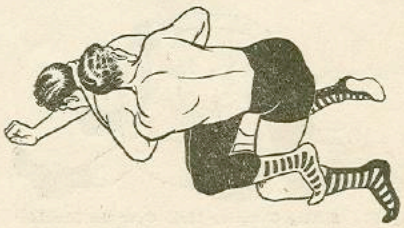


Fig. 18. Side Roll and Leg Trip





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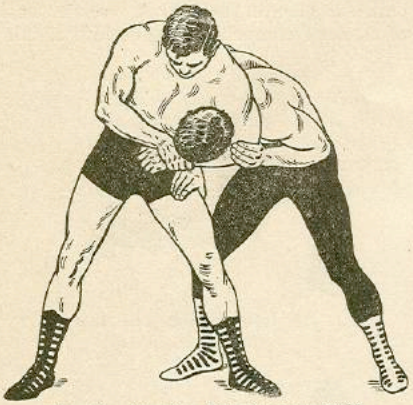
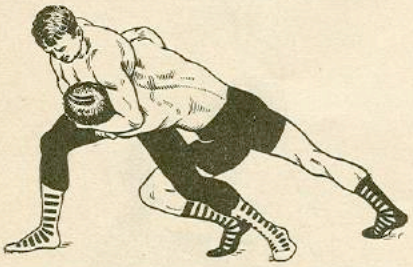


Fig. 19. Standing Side-Chancery Hold



No. 20. Side-Chancery; Twisting Your Man Over Your Thigh



Fig. 21. Sitting Chancery Hold Over the Shoulder

simply because he could not stand the pain of a certain hold. But in your practise with a friend, it is best to be reasonable with punishing holds. Punish him to the point where he has enough and then give him a chance.

The Strangle is any hold across the front of the neck which wholly or partically shuts off your partner's wind.

In Fig. 21, the man on top has had a Body Hold, as you will see, and carelessly let his head go low enough to enable the bottom man to get a Chancery on it. This usually results in a pull over the shoulders and a hard fall for the top man, especially if he should forget himself and leave go of the Body Hold he now has.

Fig. 22 shows another style of Head Chancery. This is not a Strangle, as it may appear to be, because the under man's arm goes down from the side of the head across the chest and not across the front of the neck. This hold is not as efficient as the Chancery shown in Fig. 19.

Fig. 23 is a variation of Fig. 21. It is much more sensational and ends in a harder fall than the same hold in Fig. 21 does. In practising this with a friend, be very careful, for a nasty jar can result from it.

This Chancery Over the Shoulder is something similar to what is known as the Flying Mare. In this Flying Mare, you quickly grasp our opponent's arm (either one) at the wrist with both your hands. While grasping the wrist, you at the same time nimbly turn your back to his chest and pull the arm over your shoulder. If you have grasped your opponent's right arm, you bring it over your right shoulder and vice versa. This hold is even more dangerous than the Head Chancery Over the Shoulder because the man's arm acts as a sort of sling and, consequently, he gets a harder fall.



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The hold pictured in Fig. 24 is best obtained from the back while in a standing position. From the back, your opponent is taken by surprise and as you bring him to your knee, you let your arm slide around until you are in the position shown. From this position, you fall to the mat with him or you can bring him rapidly from a standing position directly to his back on the mat.

This hold, as shown with the arm in with the head, makes it more efficient, providing you keep your chest close upon that arm which gives your opponent less chance of using it.

Fig. 25 shows the Reverse Double Front Chancery Hold which, like the preceding one, is obtained from the back. This and the preceding hold may appear to be a Strangle, but, if gotten properly, will not shut off your opponent's wind. In Fig. 24 you will see that the arm pit is just above the windpipe of the man being thrown, and allows ample room for breathing. In Fig. 25, the hand should grip on the chin and not the neck.

You can see that this hold shown in Fig. 25 is very effective if retained after dropping your man to the floor. It is difficult for the man being thrown to keep his shoulders off the mat when his head is held in a vise-like grip. Of course, the man will tug at the hands of his conqueror as soon as he is on the floor. He may or may not be too late at that time. If he should grip his opponent's hands, or arms, before he is on the floor, the result will be a more severe jar than if he uses his hands to absorb the shock, as shown.

The Head and Double Arm Front Chancery Hold, shown in Fig. 26, makes your adversary practically helpless, because he has not the use of his arms or hands. However, you will see that the wrestler with the hold is in his own way when it comes to putting his opponent's shoulders down.

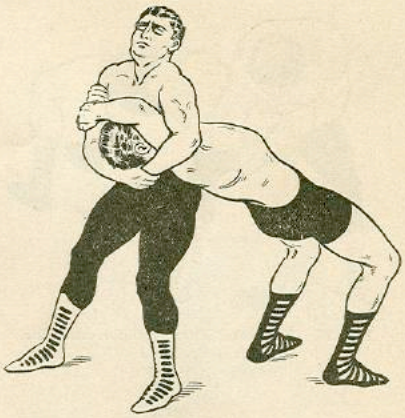


Fig. 22. Chancery Over the Arm



Fig. 23. Chancery Hold Over the Shoulder




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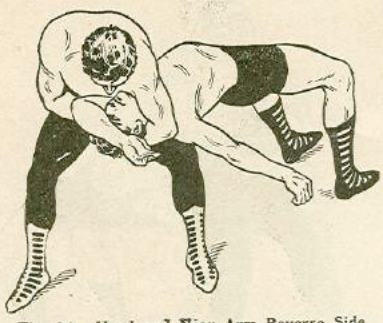


Fig. 24. Head and Near Arm Reverse Side Chancery Hold

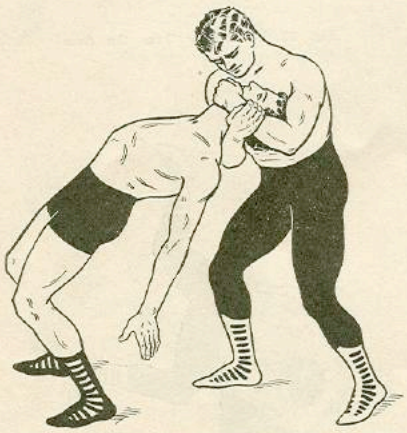


Fig. 25. Reverse Double Front Chancery Hold

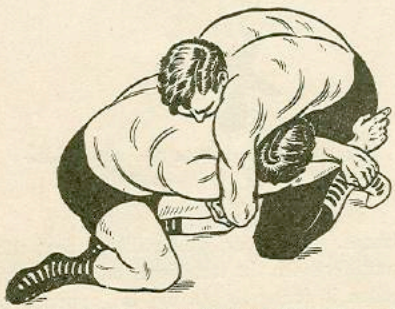


Fig. 26. Head and Double Arm Front Chancery Hold

If you have been practising holds with a friend who is not your equal in strength or in wrestling cunning, you have, no doubt, found that you can get any of these holds almost at will. I, therefore, wish to warn you that such will not be the case when you go up against an opponent of your own strength and cleverness. All the holds I give in this course are practical if you can manage to get them on your man. Of course, if you were able to get any hold you wanted at any time, there would be no sport to the wrestling game. It is the struggle for holds that makes it interesting.

The Leg Chancery Hold in Fig. 27 brings us into the leg holds proper. Leg Holds are powerful holds, as I mentioned before, but to the beginner they are more awkward to get than the Arm Holds. This Leg Chancery Hold is, as you can guess, a punishing one. In fact you could not get a fall from it alone. But the upper man is in a fine position to get a Hammer Lock (which hold will be given later) and the pain the under man is experiencing from the Leg Hold will also make it easy to apply the Hammer Lock and get a fall.

You can see how the pressure on your opponent's head can be increased by sitting your entire weight on his head or neck or how you can ease up on him by raising your body weight a little on your knee. This hold is best obtained when your man is on his hands and knees. One way to get this hold is to first straddle your opponent's back, giving him the impression you are after a Body Scissors Hold. Then when he is thrown off his guard and thinking of the coming Body Scissors, you deftly shift your body to the nap of his neck and your leg over his arm and under his chin. Then let your weight settle on him.

Fig. 28 shows another variation of the Head and Double Arm Chancery Hold. It is the same hold as in Fig. 26, only it is reversed and the manner of gripping is different. In the Front Chancery of Fig. 26, you can see that the man with



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the hold has sort of folded his arms around his opponent. He would be better prepared to retain this hold if he took a grip on one wrist. In the Side Chancery of Fig. 28, there is more chance for the defensive man to slip out than there would be if the offensive man used a shorter hold, which would bring his arms closer together. This hold, like many others, is used to punish and turn your man over with; but another hold must be quickly obtained if you hope to pin his shoulders to the mat.

In Fig. 29, we have another Side Chancery taken in a standing position. And instead of both arms, only one is caught with the head in this hold. This hold resembles the Head Lock. The wrestler with the hold is in a better position to gain a fall from this hold than from the Double Arm Chancery, in Fig. 28.

This method of proceedure should be to bring your man under you and down, falling on his chest and holding him there with both his shoulders touching, if possible.

Now we have in Fig. 30 one type of the Toe Hold. The Toe Hold is, if gotten correct, very effective because of its great punishing qualities. You can see the great pressure that can be brought to bear on the toes and you can imagine the great strain on the tendons of the instep and ankle, as well as those muscles on the shin. The arm under the back of the ankle is mostly responsible for the effectiveness of this hold, as it holds the heel clear of the buttocks and gives you something substantial to bend the instep across.

Notice how the other leg of the victim is held helpless between the lower legs of the upper man. With this hold you can force your man over to his back by gradually bringing the bent leg over to the side and down to the floor. This and the extra pain caused by it will naturally make the victim come with it to ease the pain. Then, of course, you

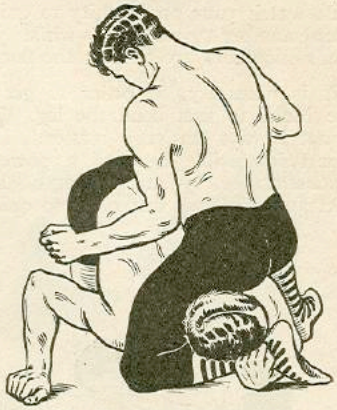


Fig. 27. Leg Chancery Hold

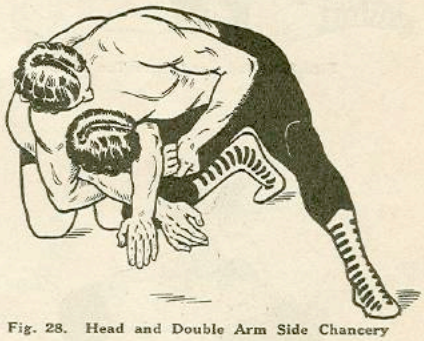


Fig. 28. Head and Double Arm Side Chancery

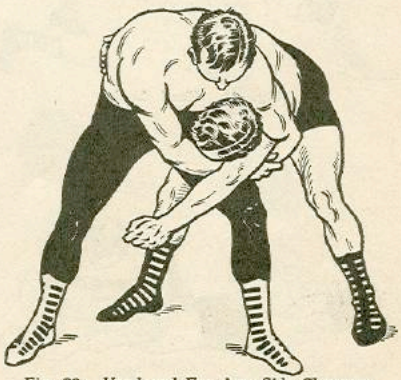


Fig. 29. Head and Far Arm Side Chancery





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must watch your opportunity to quickly catch another good hold while your man's shoulders are nearest the floor.

It is necessary, in order to get the Toe Hold, to first bend the leg. This is not always an easy matter. It is almost impossible to bend a powerful opponent's leg by arm strength alone. Therefore, the best method is to quickly grab the foot and, as you raise it up, step on the upperside of the knee joint. Then fall quickly into the required position.

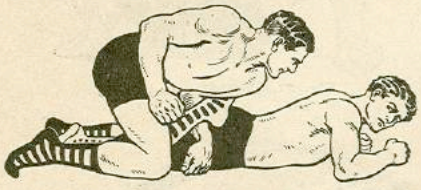


Fig. 30. Body and Arm Toe Hold

Next we have a Head Lock, Fig. 31. This hold, as illustrated, was obtained in a standing position. You will see that it is similar to the Side Chancery. But instead of tripping the wreslter sideways or turning him over the hip, the wrestler is forcing his man to the floor by his body weight and the pain from the hold. While it is hardly possible to get a fall from this hold alone, at the same time you can torture your man by retaining this hold until he is exhausted and ready to give in.

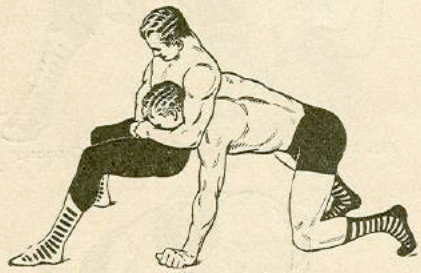


Fig. 31. Head Lock

In Fig. 32, we have a Bar Across the Face Hold. This is a hold that can be resorted to when you find it impossible to get a Half Nelson or any of the other holds that have been explained. You can turn your man over with this hold and as he goes, it is fairly easy to get a Head Lock from the front with the arm that is shown across the back. The purchase is obtained by using the arm as a pry under the head.

In Fig. 11 was shown the Leg Nelson, and in Fig. 33 is another variation of that hold. You can see that the victim's arm that is over the thigh of his opponent in Fig. 11 is then taken in both hands, and by slightly shifting the body is brought to the position as in Fig. 33. This Arm Hold is similar to a Hammer Lock and the two of them (Leg Nelson and Arm Hold) are very convincing, as you can imagine now and will learn later when you have it tried upon yourself. The victim is practically helpless.

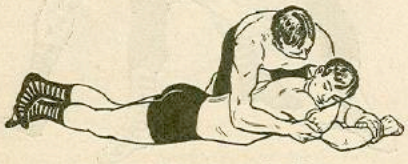


Fig. 32. Bar Across the Face

This combination should be applied with care on your friends, as it is a very easy matter to dislocate or break the arm and wrench the neck severly. Notice that the thigh of the right leg prevents the head from slipping out of this hold. Combination holds are the most practical as fall getters, for they give the thrown man less chance to wriggle out or keep his shoulders off the mat.



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In order to explain Fig. 34, we must again turn back to Fig. 18, which shows that the Side Roll and Leg Trip is a counter against a Nelson. Fig. 34 shows what is possible after the wrestler with the Nelson has been pulled under on to his back. The Leg Hold shown has to be caught by the free arm as they go over and then the free hand grips the other wrist, which not only holds the leg, but prevents the Half Nelson arm from slipping out. You can see that a fall is possible from this combination and that the victim is practically helpless to do much squirming around.

Fig. 35, illustrates a Leg Head Lock and Ankle Hold. This is a good one to use on an opponent who refuses to allow you to get Nelsons and other holds used in this position. This hold is also fairly easy to get when your man is on his hands and knees, which he is most of the time. In this position, it is easy to roll over to the side and carry your man with you. While a fall is impossible, it throws him off his guard and gives you an opening, which, if you are quick enough to take advantage of, may result in a fall.

It is also possible to sit back on your hunches and lift his leg up, thereby turning him completely over in a so-called Somersault. This, however, is of little advantage except to give you an opening and probably cause your man to become bewildered for a second.

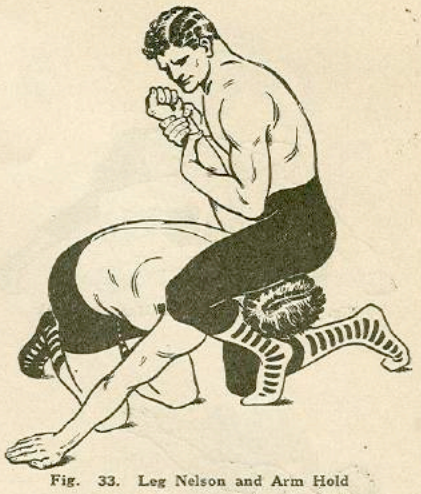


Fig. 33. Leg Nelson and Arm Hold

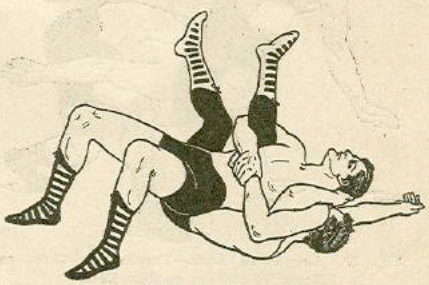


Fig. 34. Leg and Arm Lock After Half Nelson

## BAR AND LOCK HOLDS

In Fig. 36, you see the Hammer Lock, or rather a good method of getting it. The head is used as a means of bending the arm at the elbow. And as the arm is bent and the head brought to the victim's side and back, the head is gradually raised to allow the arm to be brought around to the full Hammer Lock position. This position, as you know, is with the hand forced up in the middle of the back, between the shoulder blades. The arm around the waist is an important feature, for it prevents your

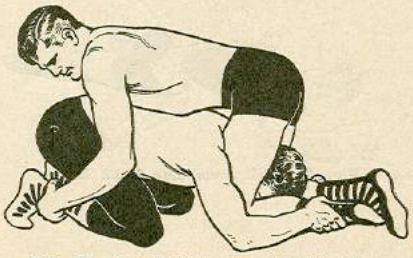


Fig. 35. Leg Head Lock and Ankle Hold





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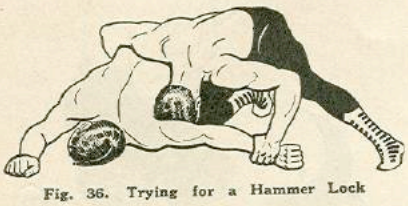


Fig. 36. Trying for a Hammer Lock

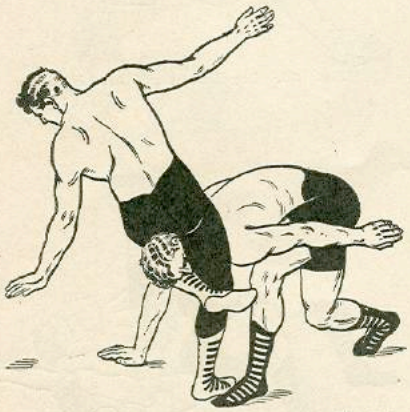


Fig. 37. Leg Head Lock—Turning to Chest to Turn Your Man on His Back

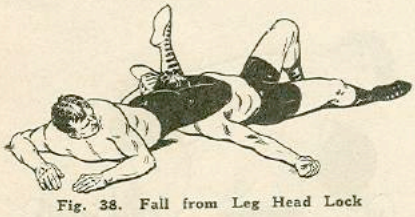


Fig. 38. Fall from Leg Head Lock

opponent from "going with it," which is a wrestling expression that means in this case a turning over to the right side and making the Hammer Lock impossible. The head also helps to prevent this, for you push down as well as forward.

The Hammer Lock is dangerous. It being one of the easiest ways to break an arm. This accounts for it being often barred from matches. Don't try it on your friends with anything but extreme care.

In Fig. 37, the wrestler who would be caught in this one, would be nothing else than slow. There may occur times, however, when you find yourself through chance able to get it.

But Fig. 38 shows that it is very impractical as a fall getter. In the first place, there is practically no weight whatever on the victim's chest and shoulders. Therefore, what is to prevent him from turning enough to at least keep one shoulder off the mat. The possessor of this hold is entirely too far away from his man. All holds are nice to know, but I would not waste much time in the practise of this one.

In Fig. 39, you see a re-enforced Leg, Head and Arm Lock. You can further see that this hold is fairly easy to obtain when your man is in the hands and knees position. You simply feint for something else, as you should do in trying for all holds, and quickly pass your leg over the head and under the chest, between the arms. Then drop your other knee and lock your foot in it.

By grasping the right wrist of your adversary, you will have his head, arm and upper body so tied up that it is impossible for him to do much else but go over with you on to his back. But, like many other holds, you then find yourself in the way of a fall and must resort to some other hold to finish him with.

In Fig. 40, you will find another and more simple variation of the re-enforced Leg Head Locks. There is no



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doubt that it is easier to grip your ankle over your opponent's head, than to fasten your feet in back of the knee, as in Fig. 39. Of course, in Fig. 40 you get a pure Leg Head lock, while in Fig. 39 the shoulder is included. This, like the preceding one, is only good as a means of turning your man and giving you an opening.

Still another type of re-enforced Leg Head Lock is shown in Fig. 41. The wrestler seems to have obtained a fall, but it is easier to do in pictures than in an actual match. The same fault I found with the Leg Head Lock in Fig. 38 applies also to this one, and that is the body of the wrestler applying the lock is too far away. A great pressure can be exerted on the victim, but it is a very uncomfortable position for the manipulator himself, as you can imagine.

Fig. 42 illustrates again the Leg Half Nelson in a slightly different form. The difference is entirely with the arm that is over the thigh. A fall is very practical from this hold, as you will see, by looking ahead to Fig. 45. The arm over the thigh in Fig. 42 is held in that position so it will be in the position shown in Fig. 45 when your man is turned over on his back.

By straightening the leg, you will see that the shoulders are forced up off the mat, making a head bridge impossible. The victim is executing a Shoulder Bridge; but by bringing his head up farther and forcing his chin on his chest, you compel him to drop into a perfect fall. A whole lot depends on the position of the foot in this hold, for once that arm gets out from under the instep, the hold is gone.

In Fig. 43, we have a simpler Leg Head Lock than is shown in Fig. 39. Notice, however, that in Fig. 43 the lock is obtained from the front and not from the back, as is true of Fig. 39. I do not have to ask you which is the best position for the purpose of obtaining a fall. By merely lying down flat with this hold on the head you can put your

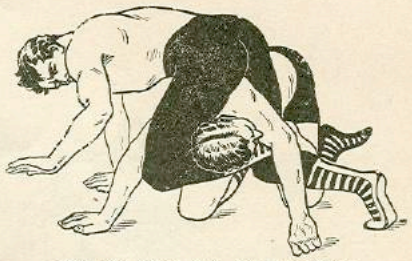


Fig. 39.—Head and Arm Leg Lock

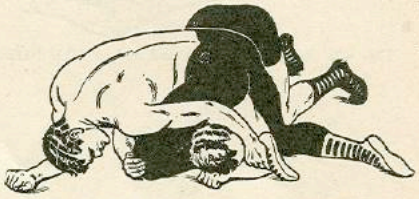


Fig. 40. Re-enforced Leg Chancery

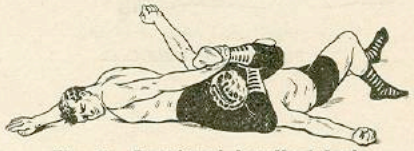


Fig. 41. Re-enforced Leg Head Lock

man's shoulders down. In that position, the right thigh and the weight of the hips are on the shoulders and chest, making it a more practical hold. As a rule, your man must be partly turned with some other hold before you can get this Leg Lock.

Fig. 44 shows a triple confomation of the Half Nelson, Leg Head Lock and Bar Across the Back. This is, as most combinations are, a very good means




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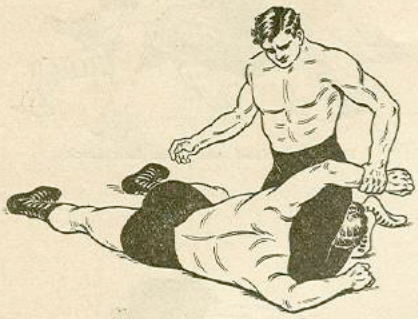


Fig. 42. Leg Head Lock and a Leg Half Nelson



Fig. 43.—Leg Head Lock

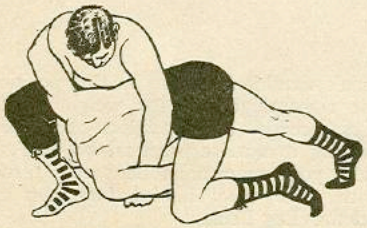


Fig. 44. Arm Half Nelson, Leg Half Nelson and Bar Hold

whereby a man can be thrown. It is not always possible to get the Bar Hold across the back, but it is fairly easy to put the Leg Nelson on after the Arm Nelson has been well applied. Note that in the Bar Hold the wrist is grasped. This part of the hold will not prevent a fall if the arm across the back is not allowed to get up too high on the back. When you turn your man over with this combination, you have something on him that will easily get a fall for you.

Fig. 45 has already been explained. Therefore, we will take up Fig. 46, or a Leg Body Lock and Double Wrist combination. This Leg Hold is only slightly different from the Body Scissors, which will be explained in the next chapter. It is easy to turn your opponent over with this combination; but you must ease up on the leg pressure as you turn him over and slide to the side into a Body Scissors. Of course, at this stage of the turning-over process, the wrist holds are impractical, but a good scissors with your man nearly on his back is difficult to get out of and another Arm or Shoulder Hold can be obtained in the meantime.

Next is the Leg Lock on the head and one leg. This hold is difficult to get and is usually only obtained by very rapid leg work and when your man happens to roll over or fall into a position that gives an opportunity. If you ever do manage to get it in a match, there is no reason why you cannot get a fall with it, as your opponent is helpless and his shoulders are clear for a fall.

## SCISSORS and COMBINATIONS

The Scissors Hold is a very well-known one, and is very effective in its holding and punishing powers. The difference between a Leg Lock and a Scissors is in the position of the Legs. In the Scissors, the legs are fairly straight. In fact, after the ankles are locked, the pressure on the body or head is increased by the straightening of the legs, which naturally brings the knees closer together.

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Fig. 48 shows a Scissors on the Head. It is called the Flying Scissors, because if it is to be executed at all, it must be done "on the fly," as the saying is. Or, in other words, very quickly and at an opportune time. Your opponent certainly is not going to kneel idle while you are getting into position to get this hold. You must be quick and cleverly fool your man, or you will never get this one. If you do succeed in getting this hold in the position shown, it is no trouble to turn over and bring your man with you, as illustrated in the next picture, Fig. 49.

You can see how the wrestler's shoulders are held down by the two thighs of the other wrestler. It is possible for a strong wrestler to raise one shoulder and his opponent's leg by the power of his body, but the pressure that is felt on his head will weaken his efforts somewhat. This illustration is not perfect because the Scissors Hold would be more effective if the feet or ankles were locked instead of the way they are crossed. Figs. 57 and 58 give a better idea of this lock.

The Body Scissors and Far Nelson is next, in Fig. 50. A Scissors on the body is much easier to get than a Scissors on the legs or head. A wrestler can play for a Nelson or some other hold and then quickly throw his legs around the body and turn his opponent over on his back. The Body Scissors is placed around the waist and not on the chest. The stomach, being soft with no bone protection, can offer no resistance. This makes the hold an antagonizing one, especially if your opponent possesses powerful legs.

Fig. 51 shows a Scissors on the shoulder. The feet are in a position to hold the other shoulder down and the turnout from that direction. There cannot, however, be a fall in exactly this position, as the crotch of the holder prevents that shoulder from touching. The legs should be straightened, which would

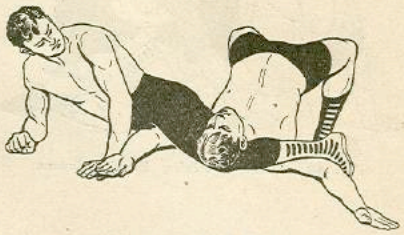


Fig. 45. Leg Nelson

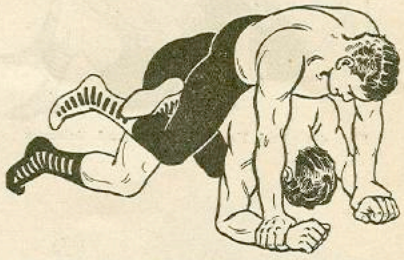


Fig. 46. Leg Body Lock and Double Wrist Combination

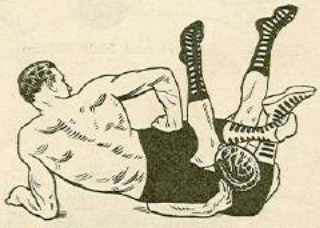


Fig. 47. Leg Lock on Head and One Leg





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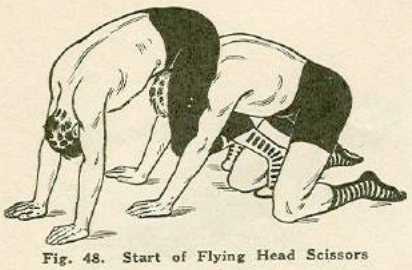


Fig. 48. Start of Flying Head Scissors

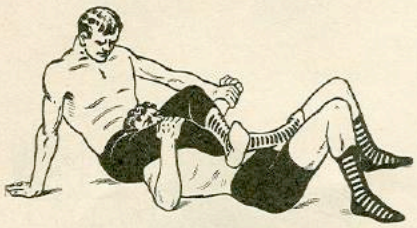


Fig. 49. Fall From Flying Head Scissors

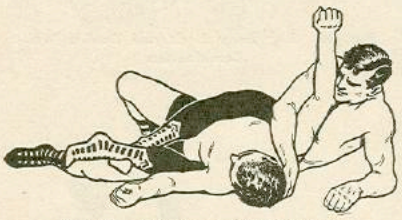


Fig. 50. Scissors and Half Nelson

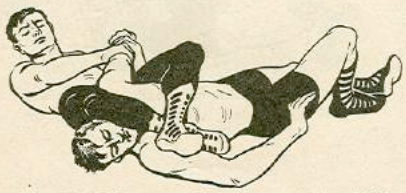


Fig. 51. Scissors on Shoulders and Arm Hold

move the crotch further out and give that shoulder room to be forced to the floor.

The best way to escape from this hold would be to bring the legs overhead quickly and with force enough to somersault the victim over on to his chest and knees, regardless of the legs across his chest.

You know, of course, that in a match no wrestler would or should lay there quiet while the other wrestler pulls back on his arm. The time to get out of a hold is when it is first taken or, better still, just before it is obtained properly. And a wrestler who can roll, flop, turn, twist and bridge is a difficult problem.

In Fig. 52, we see holds that are not a one-sided proposition, as have been the preceding ones. The holds are the Body Scissors and Body Hold. The wrestler with the Scissors has the best hold, but he is in a bad position. Then, also, he has the Scissors too far down on the Hips where, no matter how hard he squeezes he cannot hurt his opponent. If he had this hold on the waist, he might have been able to torture his man so much that he would be compelled to give his attention to relieving himself of this great pressure, and thereby give up trying to put the bottom man's shoulders on the mat.

Fig. 53 shows a Scissors applied in the correct place, but as I said before, the legs should be straightened, bringing great pressure to bear on the sides under the ribs.

This Fig. 53 is a combination hold, as you have learned by this time. The Front Head Lock is fastened upon the head, under the chin. If the arm is left to bear on the throat, it then becomes a strangle and is barred. Many referees would take no chances and call it a strangle as it is. The wrestler with this combination must ease to the side a bit to allow room for the shoulders to meet the mat. No wrestler would leave his hand idle as the victim is doing in this case.



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The next two forms of Scissors are not as good as the combination shown in Fig. 56. Fig. 54 shows a hold that is very good as far as rendering your opponent's arms utterly useless is concerned. But the Scissors is in the way of a fall. And what will prevent the held man from throwing his legs over his head and going over on to his chest, which position would find the holder farther from getting a fall.

The hold in Fig. 55 is a far better one than Fig. 54. The reasons are apparent. The Scissors can be applied far enough from the shoulders to allow them to rest on the mat. Besides, the victim of this hold cannot easily go over forward or backward without probably breaking his own arms.

The best of the three is shown in Fig. 56. This is another combination. The Scissors is applied to one arm only, and a form of the Quarter Nelson is on the other. Both arms are helpless. The head is on the back, which prevents a raising of the legs high enough over the head to perform a somersault out of the hold, and the shoulders are in such a position that a fall is unquestionable. This hold can be obtained from the hand-and-knee position, but you must roll your opponent over sideways and turn on your own stomach as you go.

Fig. 57 shows the ordinary Body Scissors and a Single Chancery Across the Face. This is a very practical, less-complicated and often-used hold. This is not a very comfortable position to be in, because of the pressure on the face from the Arm Hold and the pressure on the body from the leg hold. A fall can easily be obtained with this combination.

Figure. 58 shows a similar combination of the Body Scissors and Head Hold. Two hands and arms are used on the head instead of one, as in Fig. 57. This illustration is not true to life, for no wrestler would grip his own wrist, shown, when he could use his hands to force the Head Lock off. The best way to break this type of Scissors Hold on the body, is to quickly wrap your own

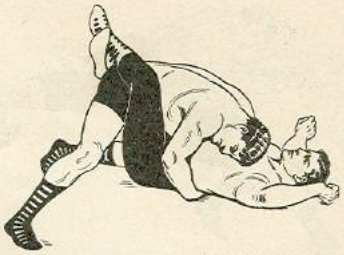


Fig. 52. Scissors and Body Hold

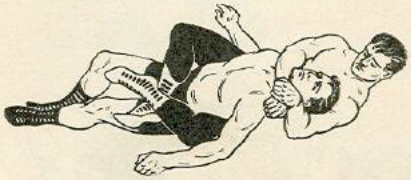


Fig. 53. Body Scissors and Head Hold

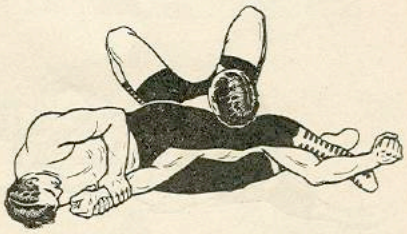


Fig. 54. Scissors on Arms and a Wrist Hold

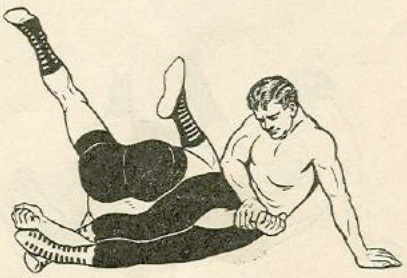


Fig. 55. Scissors on Arms and a Wrist Hold

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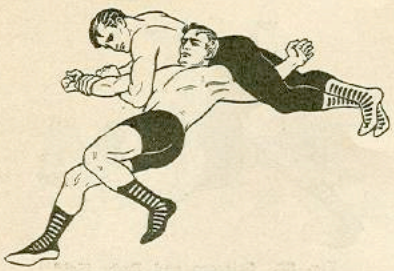


Fig. 56. Scissors and Quarter Nelson on Arms

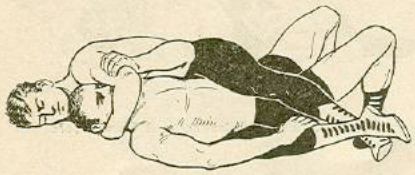


Fig. 57. Body Scissors and Face Hold

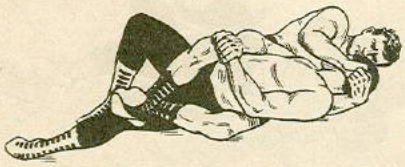


Fig. 58. Body Scissors and Head Lock

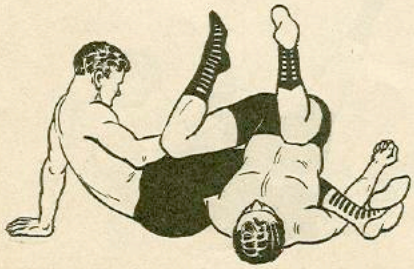


Fig. 59. Scissors on Both Arms

legs around the feet and lower legs of your opponent and pull them down hard with a Scissors. The original Scissors on you will then be forced down on his hip bones and eventually break entirely.

In Fig. 59, we have the opposite view of Fig. 55. You will see that as the feet and legs are slipped farther out toward the hands, the body will drop, making the fall more convincing and less questionable.

The next is a Body Scissors and a Double Wrist Hold. The arm that is gripping the wrist under the back must be pulled from under to allow a fall. This hold is not as good with the Scissors as a Face Hold, like that shown in Fig. 57. A Face Hold of this kind is very annoying, to say the least; and when the head is held down in a vice-like grip, the shoulders can do little toward raising. Therefore, I would not place much confidence in the Wrist and Wrist Hold in Fig. 60.

The Scissors in Fig. 61 is very clever, and only a clever man can get it. Once gotten correctly, it is good for a fall. You can see how the entire shoulders are left free to be put down by turning your opponent over. By straightening the legs as much as possible, the head is forced down hard on the chest, which is not a comfortable position for it.

Fig. 62 is a Body Scissors and a break for the Body Hold that is being fastened on the wrestler who has the Scissors. You remember this break, for it is the pushing back of the chin with the heel of your hand, the same as when a person playfully grabs you around the waist and tries to bend your back in by pulling with their arms and pushing with their upper body. It is very effective on the Body Hold, if applied in a rough manner. You must become rough in getting your holds, if you hope to make a good wrestler.

You will notice that the man with the Scissors also has an Arm Hold on one arm of his victim. This makes the push



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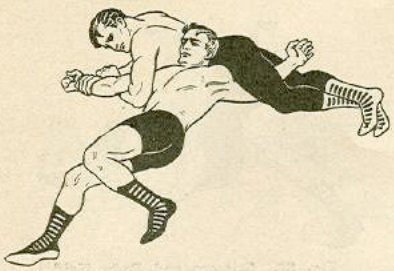


Fig. 56. Scissors and Quarter Nelson on Arms

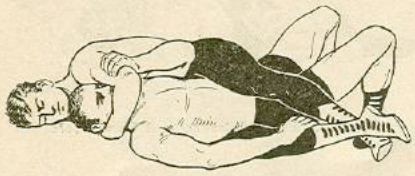


Fig. 57. Body Scissors and Face Hold

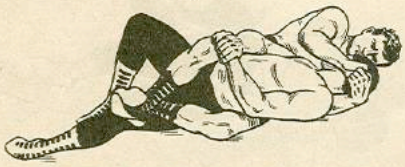


Fig. 58. Body Scissors and Head Lock

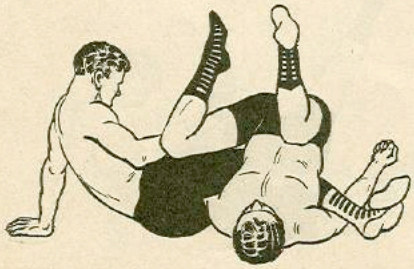


Fig. 59. Scissors on Both Arms

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You will notice that the man with the Scissors also has an Arm Hold on one arm of his victim. This makes the push




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against the chin more effective because the body is held stationary, putting all the strain on the neck. If the arm was not caught in this hold, the body would be pushed away with the chin, making it less effective.

In Fig. 63 we have a complicated combination. One leg and the hand is caught in the Scissors. The other leg is fast in an Arm Lock. The shoulders are flat upon the mat and the fallen wrestler is absolutely helpless. This is another combination that can only be obtained on the fly and at the most opportune time. You could hardly force your opponent into this hold. Therefore, it must be caught just when your opponent happens to roll or fall into a similar position. If the Scissors is obtained on the one leg and head first, it is not difficult to get the Arm Hold on the other leg.

Fig. 64 shows a wrestler who has been thrown to a near fall, but has Bridged and taken a Head and Croch Hold. With this combination, he can pull his adversary's head down and push his legs and lower body over on to his back, completely reversing the situation and probably getting a fall for himself. This is another example of how rapid thought and action turn the tables. A wrestling match, in order to be interesting to watch, must possess this rapid action quality. A slow moving match is usually caused by both wrestlers doing nothing but pitting their strength against each other.

I might mention that the Crotch Hold is well known and often used. Note how the hand is placed on the extreme lower back.

The Body Scissors and another form of the Double Wrist Hold is shown in Fig. 65. This combination looks convincing in the illustration. But with an active opponent it is not so easy to first get and then keep. You can see that the underman has his feet in a position to raise his hips and possibly throw his man over to the side and off.

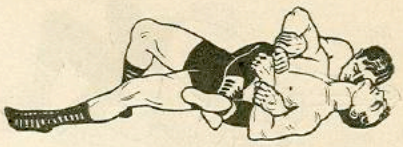


Fig. 60. Body Scissors and Double Wrist Hold

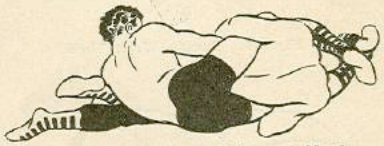


Fig. 61. Scissors on Body and Head

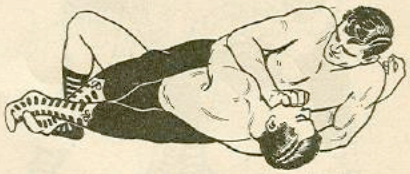


Fig. 62. Body Scissors and Break for Body Hold



Fig. 63. Scissors and Arm Lock on Legs

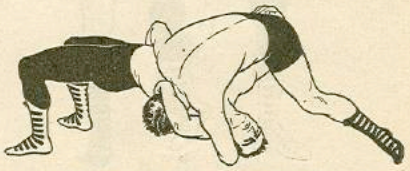


Fig. 64. Head and Crotch Hold



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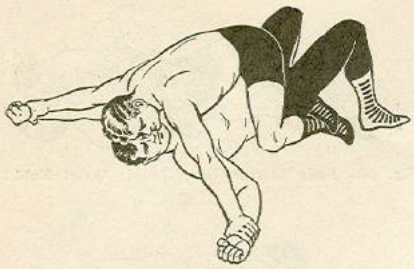


Fig. 65. Double Wrist Hold

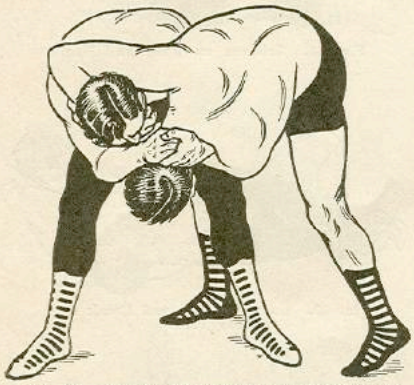


Fig. 66. Double Chanceries; Double Chancery Over Arm Used as a Counter Against Side Chancery Hold

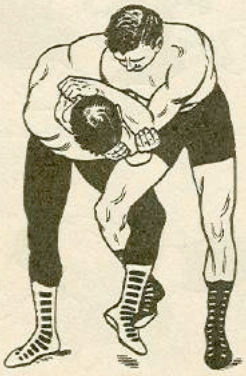


Fig. 67. Head Chancery and Grape Vine

The top man would be in a better position if he had the wrists he is gripping up close to the head. This would allow him to sit back farther and make it more difficult for the under man to throw him off.

In Fig. 66, we have a Double Chancery. In other words, practically the same hold is used as a counter to prevent a fall from a Head Chancery. One hold is as good as the other, making it only a question of strength and the ability to stand punishment. If the strongest wrestler of the two happens to be able to stand more pain than his weaker opponent (which is nearly always true, this hold will be a one-sided affair and it will be of advantage to the weaker wrestler to try for another hold. If the stronger of the two is not able to stand what the weaker wrestler can, then it is more of an even proposition. In the illustration, the wrestler whose head is highest has the best hold. This was the hold that was first obtained.

Fig. 67 shows a combination of Head Chancery and Leg Grape Vine. This Grape Vine Hold is used as a means of tripping your opponent and getting a grip upon his leg. This Grape Vine Naturally makes it an easier matter to throw your opponent to the mat.

In Fig. 68, we have a Hip Hold from between the legs. This is used often in a case when no suitable hold can be obtained such as the Half Nelson and others. In this position, and with this hold, you can sling your man around rapidly this way and that way, making opening that you could not get otherwise. Of course, again you must be quick to seize the right opportunity and apply the correct hold.

The next is a very efficient means of turning a strong and stubborn opponent over on his back. To get this hold, you reach under your man quickly and grab his wrist on the opposite side, as shown. You then roughly pull it from under him and nothing can prevent him from turning over. The leg is used as an aid in the turning. As soon as he is partly




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on his back, fall heavily on his chest and get a Head Hold. Also try to work the leg into a Scissors on the body at the same time.

Fig. 70 shows another triple combination. It is made up of the Body Scissors, a Half Nelson and a Far Wrist Hold. This combination is good as far as making your opponent completely helpless is concerned, but the arm across the back which grips the wrist is in the way of a fall. The thing to do then, is to withdraw this arm from under the shoulders and do your best to make his shoulders stay down long enough to give you the fall. For instance, place that hand on your man's chin. This will keep his head back. When the head is back, it is difficult to raise the shoulders.

Fig. 71 shows a combination hold resulting from a Far Nelson. You will notice that the wrestler with the Nelson was compelled to lean across his opponent's back while he was on his hands and knees, in order to get a Far Nelson. By applying an Arm Hold similar to that applied in the Regular Half Nelson in Fig. 18, the under man was able to bring his hands together. Then, as shown, he is about to roll his opponent over on to his back.

Whether or not he can get a fall from this combination, relies upon the extent of his cleverness and strength. The fact remains, however, that he has broken a Far Nelson, put his adversary on the defensive and is now the possessor of a good combination. When you try this hold, learn to send your man over with a jar and put all your weight heavily on his chest.

Fig. 72 shows a fifty-fifty proposition. That is, each man has a Head Lock on the other. The wrestler with the Leg Head Lock has an advantage even though he is on his back. The reason for this advantage is that he can torture his man more with the Leg Hold because of the greater strength of the legs than his opponent can with the Arm Head Lock.

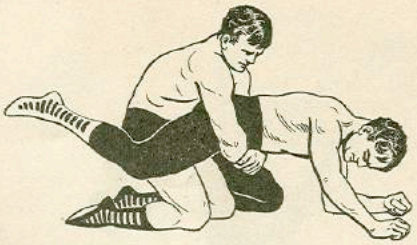


Fig. 68. Hip Hold

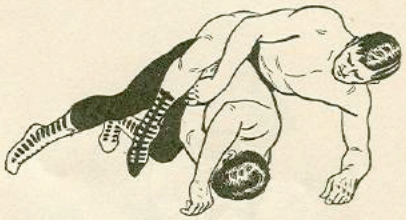


Fig. 69. Far Arm and Leg Hold

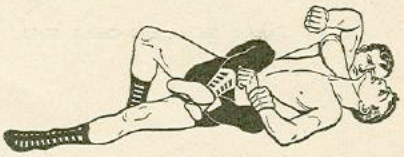


Fig. 70. Scissors, Wrist and Half Nelson

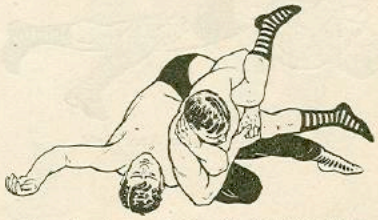


Fig. 71. Arm and Leg Combination from Half Nelson



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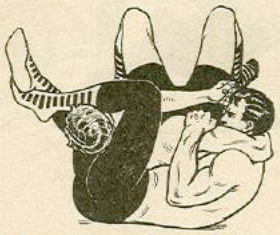


Fig. 72. Leg Head Lock and Chancery

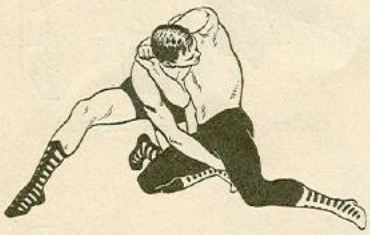


Fig. 73. Farther Nelson and Crotch Hold

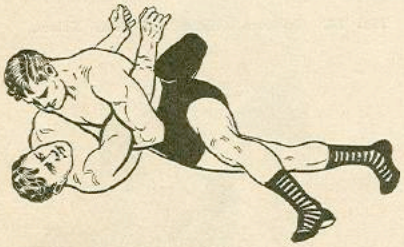


Fig. 74. Double Arm Hold

opponent's shoulders touch. His chance of escape from the Leg Lock lies in his ability to go the other way, pulling his man's head with him. For while the Leg Lock is the most effective, it is also the most difficult of the two to retain and he has a better chance of slipping his head out in a roll over than the other wrestler has of slipping out of the Arm Lock.

It is one thing to be able to get good holds and another thing to make them produce falls. In a match, you will notice the many holds that are obtained before a fall is effected.

In Fig. 73, we have another Crotch Hold which is being used as a Counter against a Farther Nelson. The wrestler with this Crotch Hold can actually pick his opponent up bodily and when he has him clear of the floor, pull the crotch and legs under and fall heavily upon his man, who will then be on his back a little bewildered from the jar of the fall.

The next is a Double Arm Lock. If you manage to get your opponent in this position, you should be able to produce a fall. The under man is so locked that he cannot do much or any rolling. This Double Arm Lock can be taken in cases when your opponent is on his back near a fall in this position and is using his hands and arms to push you off with. He will most likely push against your chest or shoulders, which puts both his arms in this position and allows you to quickly encircle his arms with yours.

Fig. 75 shows another type of Double Wrist Hold. If you will refer to Fig. 65, you will see how it is different from that Double Wrist Hold. The position that the under man has assumed makes it very difficult for his opponent to get a hold. Note that the feet are locked to prevent a Leg, Toe, or Crotch Hold. The body being flat on the mat, makes the several body holds almost impossible. The arms are drawn up close and tight to the sides preventing Nelsons of any type. But if this position is used often and for long periods of time, it makes a slow, understanding match, as well as a





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The wrestler on top cannot force his adversary's shoulder down while his head is gripped and pushed away from the direction he must go to make his one-sided affair. It will sure bring calls dissatisfaction from an audience. Always remember that an audience wants action regardless of who is thrown.

This Double Wrist Hold gives the upper man an opportunity to throw the under man around somewhat and make him give up this purely defensive position.

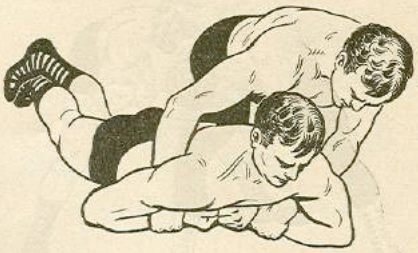


Fig. 75. Double Wrist Hold

The next hold is the Double Chancery. It shows how the Side Chancery is used as a counter against a Side Chancery. However the Chancery that is taken across the middle of the back is not as effective as the one directly around the neck. It does not possess the punishing quality for two reasons. One is that only one arm can be used, which is not as powerful as two. The other is the back protects the neck a great deal.

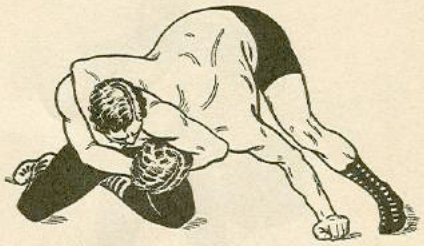


Fig. 76. Double Chanceries

In Fig. 77, we have the Reverse Head and Near Arm and Head Front Chancery. The wrestler being bent backward has the Reverse Head Chancery and the wrestler doing the bending has the Near Arm and Head Front Chancery. Needless to say, the latter has the advantage. The fact that the near arm is useless to its owner, makes his One Arm Chancery a weak hold. There is nothing to stop him from being roughly dropped on his back to the mat.

If you will refer to Fig. 29, you will see the Head and Far Arm Chancery, while in this, Fig. 77 is on the Near Arm.

Fig. 78 shows clearer the difference between a Head and Far Arm Side Chancery and a Head and Near Arm Side Chancery. In Fig. 78, notice how this hold is re-enforced by the grip on the Near Arm while the other arm is gripping the wrist. This hold is obtained slightly from the back. It puts your opponent in a more or less helpless state and he cannot prevent himself from going at least to the mat.

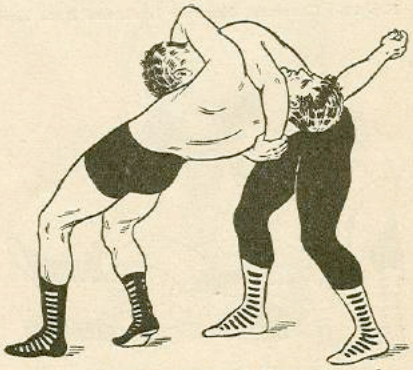


Fig. 77. Reverse Head and Near Arm and Head Front Chancery Hold

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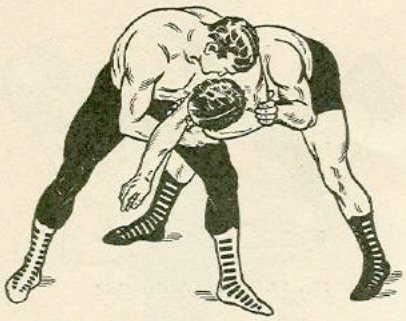


Fig. 78. Head and Near Arm Side Chancery

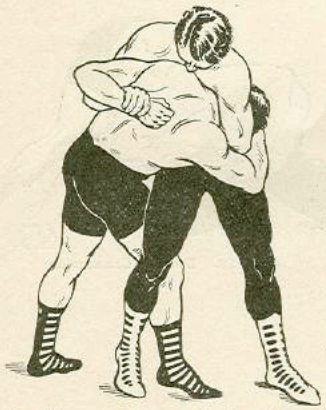


Fig. 79. Chancery, Hammer Lock and Back Heel

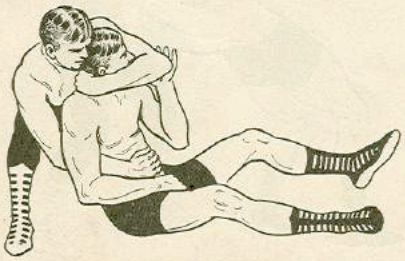


Fig. 80. Face and Body Hold.

Now in Fig. 79, we have a real combination. It consists of a Hammer Lock, Head Chancery and the back of this leg is used as a trip. With this combination, it is easy to roughly drop your man to the mat on his back. There is danger in doing this too roughly with a friend, however, and the danger lies in the Hammer Lock. This Lock is bad enough in itself, but worse if your weight and your opponent's weight is dropped on the arm in this position. Therefore, be careful of it.

In Fig. 80 we have a Face Hold and grip on the body. This is used when your man goes into a sit out of another hold. Note how the wrestler who is sitting is using his right hand to force off the Face Hold. To get a fall from this hold is hardly possible. but you could release the Body Hold and force your man to his back with the Face Hold. Then you can get an Arm Hold with the hand that had the Body Hold. The Sit Out, is as you will remember, a method of sitting back from your hands and knees when a hold is obtained on you. It usually will break most holds.

Fig. 81 gives us the Half Nelson in combination with a Nelson on the leg. Do not mistake this Leg Hold for a Toe Hold, although it has almost as many torturing qualities. The farther the leg is drawn up, the more the under wrestler will be willing to turn over on his back. Note how the hand is placed in front of the hip in order to lend power. As the under man goes over, this Leg Nelson can be retained as the foot is pulled to the side of the hip to make it more painful than if straight back.

In Fig. 82, we again have a Scissors on the Body Hold and that remains of a Half Nelson. This illustration shows a fall resulting. But there is no reason why the wrestler on his back cannot twist his body from the waist and raise his left shoulder off the mat. The only reason for him lying still in this position, would be complete exhaustion from the effects of the Scissors Hold.





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The Head Chancery and the Leg and Arm Hold in Fig. 83 shows a very effective combination. With this combination, your victim has very little or no contact with the mat and is vertically fastened to your back to be dropped upon at will. It is best to get the Side Head Chancery first, and then by deftly dropping your hips under your man, take his near leg in your arm as shown. The arm being caught in the hold with the leg makes it more effective, but it is mostly a matter of accident if you are able to catch it. You could catch your man's remaining free leg in a Scissors after you have him on the mat, which would tie him up completely. Be careful how you fall on a friend when you have this hold, for you can easily knock the wind out of him, as the saying is.

Now in Fig. 84, we have another form of the Toe Hold. It is combined, as you will see, with a Leg Head Lock and Wrist Hold. This is a good combination, but this type of Toe Hold is not easy to get and a man must have a powerful grip to hold it on a kicking foot. It would be better for you to release the Wrist Hold and apply that hand on the foot as an aid to the other hand. In this manner you could hold and twist the toes to a greater extent. A fall should result from this Toe Hold and the Head Lock. They make the thrown man helpless and in a doubly painful position.

Fig. 85 illustrates a fall resulting from the Side Chancery on the Head and the Leg Hold. This is the same hold shown in Fig. 83. The only difference is that the arm is not locked with the leg. You will see why I cautioned you about the manner in which you throw your friends with this hold. You cannot stop yourself from letting your entire weight drop heavily upon him. This position in Fig. 85 is not yet the fall position. The upper wrestler must roll his man farther back so that his shoulders touch the mat. As it is, the thrown man is on his head and one shoulder. If you can possibly bring your hands close

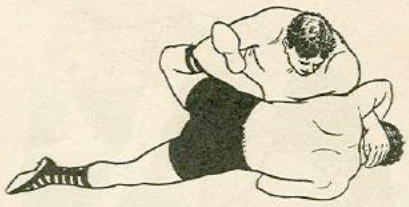


Fig. 81. Nelson and Nelson on Leg

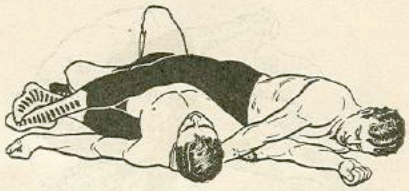


Fig. 82. Scissors and Half Nelson

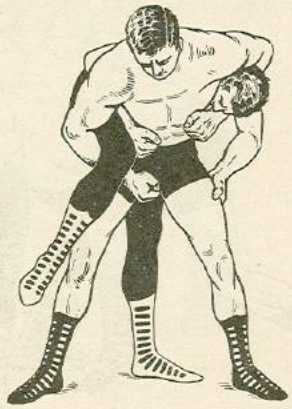


Fig. 83. Side Chancery and Leg Hold Combination



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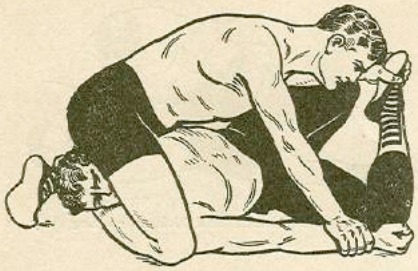


Fig. 84. Tiple Combination, Leg-Head Lock, Toe Hold and Wrist Hold

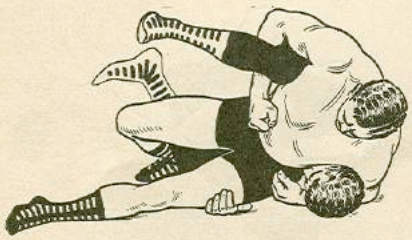


Fig. 85. Fall rom Side Chancery and Leg Hold Combination

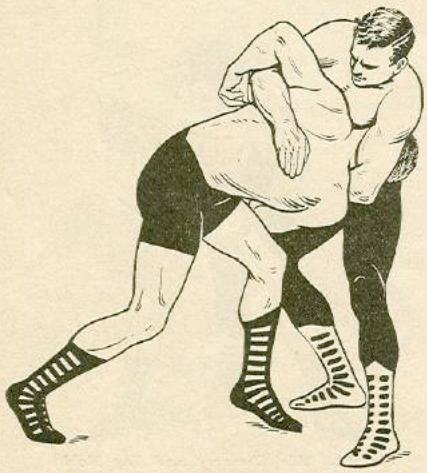


Fig. 86. Standing Chancery and Bar Hold

enough to grip them, you can put more pressure on the two holds and, consequently, torture your opponent more.

Fig. 86 shows a very good combination for the purpose of turning your man over to his back as you throw him to the mat. After you have the Head Chancery, it is not extremely difficult to obtain the Bar Hold. This Bar Hold is responsible for turning the wrestler over. Again you turn him quickly and drop with him to the mat, whereupon the Bar Hold is released for a better hold in which the arm will not obstruct a fall.

The Head Chancery shown here is not so difficult to obtain either. It can be taken when you are sparring for a hold. Just as soon as your opponent's head is low enough, you quickly take this hold from over his head.

In Fig. 87, we have another combination that resembles that in Fig. 85. If you look closely, you will notice the difference. Instead of having your man in back of you, as in Fig. 85, you have him doubled up in front of you. You will also note that the hands are clinched, as I advised, if possible, in Fig. 85. It, however, is easier to clinch the hands in this combination than in the combination in Fig. 85, and the reason plainly is that your man is doubled up closer.

From a fall standpoint, this combination is not so practical as the combination in Fig. 85. You can see the one shoulder rests against the chest of the wrestler with the holds. In order to put that shoulder down, the hold must be released considerably.

In Fig. 88, we have first a Chancery on the Head, which the wrestler on your right has. He has made the mistake of allowing his head to drop low enough so that the other wrestler can get the same hold and give him a dose of his own medicine. With these holds, it would be a matter of who possessed the most strength of arm or which one could stand the most strength of arm or which one could stand the most pain. There is not




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much chance for the squirming about tactics that I have recommended many times before. Therefore, this is one case where strength alone will win.

The Leg Chancery and Wrist Hold is shown in Fig. 89. It is really the beginning of the fall shown in Fig. 80. The stiff arm is used as a lever, and is pushed down to the floor.

The Head and Arm Chancery in illustration 90 is a better one than that in Fig. 29. You can see how the back is headed directly for the mat by means of this hold and a trip combination. This is another case where the thrown man can get a terrible jar or possibly a broken rib. These dangers, of course, are not considered in a professional match. But there is nothing to be gained by such accidents to a friend. So when throwing your partner with this hold, let him down fairly easy.

It may not seem quite right to those of my pupils who have not had the good fortune to witness a real match, but it is a fact that such tactics as pulling hair, biting and punching are resorted to by a great many professional wrestlers.

I remember one particular case in a match I witnessed in an Eastern City. Dr. Roller, at that time one of the best light-heavyweights, was matched with a great big German wrestler. This wrestler was like most foreigners—a very powerful and overly-stout man. But Roller was too fast and clever for him. They sparred around quite some minutes, in which time Roller was so easily able to evade all the efforts of his opponent to get hold that this put the German into a rage. While in this rage, he grabbed at Roller's hair and succeeded in getting a handful, which was not to Roller's liking. Roller managed to get away from this hold, and from then on he would make grabs at the long mustache of his opponent. It is needless to say that the fans enjoyed seeing the big fellow pulled around the mat by his mustache. Of course, he complained to the referee, but that official paid no at-

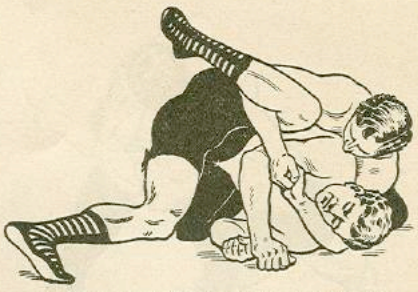


Fig. 87. Both Head and Leg in Chancery

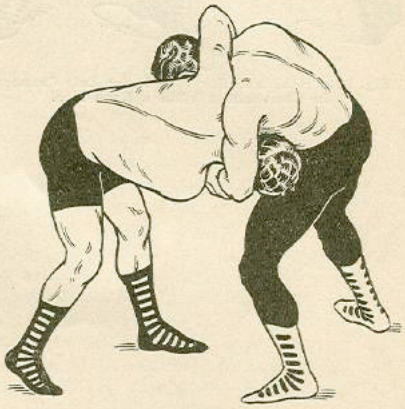


Fig. 88. Double Chanceries; Front Chancery Used as a Counter Against Front Chancery

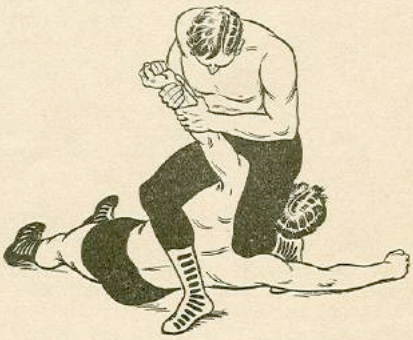


Fig. 89. Fall Imminent from Leg Chancery



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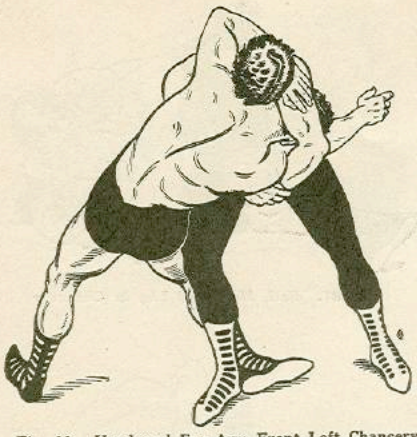


Fig. 90. Head and Far Arm Front Left Chancery in Combination With a Back Heel

tention to him. Roller finally got down to business and threw this man in two straight falls. While such things are enjoyed by an audience, they are not, however, considered good wrestling manners.

Before closing, I wish to impress you with the importance of perfecting the getting of a Side Head Chancery or Head Lock, as it is called by some. I found this hold very much to my liking when I was giving more actual time to the wrestling game than I am at present. I have gone so far as to get this hold from the start and compel my opponent to actually go to a fall with the pain and helplessness it causes. Learn that hold well and you will have learned something.




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## Notes


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