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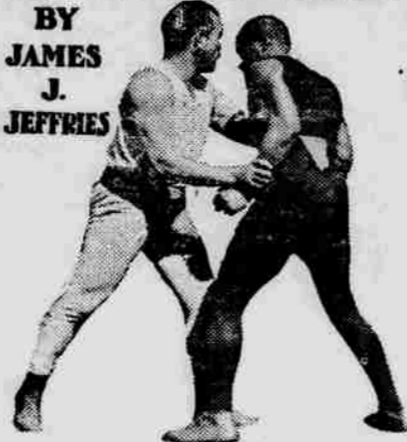
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MY STORY OF MY LIFE

BY
JAMES
J.
JEFFRIES



From photo taken April 15, 1910.

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CHAPTER XVII.

I GET DECISION OVER SHARKEY AND
TRAIN TO MEET CORBETT.

IT was less than five months after winning the championship that I gave Tom Sharkey his chance, just as I had promised. To prepare for the fight I went to my old quarters where the training was done for the battle with Fitzsimmons. Jack was with me again, and Ryan as well as Ernest Roeder, the wrestler, who was a good man to rough around with. We had long runs, hard handball games and plenty of rough work. The big international yacht races were on, and we could watch Columbia and Shamrock from the shore near our camp. More English fighters were training near us, and we put up some hot arguments about the yachts. The only thing that prevented trouble was that in our camp we were all heavy-weights and the Englishmen were little fellows. So we only had a lot of fun stringing them.

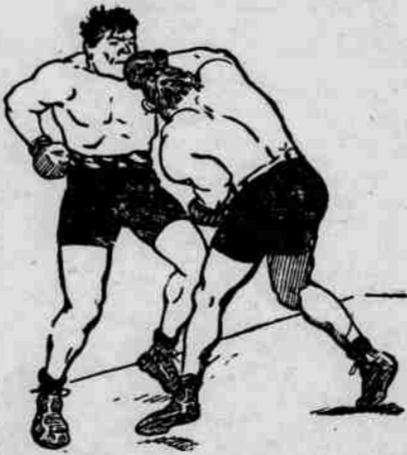
The date originally set for the match was Oct. 27, but in throwing the eight pound medicine ball with Roeder I had the misfortune to strain my left elbow badly. I missed the ball and it struck my forearm. The strain didn't amount to anything at first, but soon the elbow became so sore that I had to cut out boxing entirely and get a doctor. It was not until Oct. 23 that I could take the bandages off and pick up my regular training work again.

Sharkey meanwhile was training hard at New Dorp, Staten Island, and reports said that he was in the finest shape of his life.

That was a fight to be remembered. Over the ring of the Coney Island Athletic club was an arrangement of electric lights for the moving pictures, so many of them that the heat thrown down on the ring was like a blast from a furnace. Siler was referee again.

The moment the fight began I dropped into my crouch and walked toward Tom, jabbing him lightly. He rushed with a wild swing. We clinched, and Tom threw me off with a heave to show how strong he was. I was boxing carefully, encouraging Sharkey's leads and blocking them without much trouble. In the second round I pumped a right hander into his ribs, and he went down for an eight second count. I thought it would soon be all over, but there never was a greater mistake. He jumped up and lunged at me so hard that when I sidestepped he fell on his hands and knees. Up he hopped and landed a swing on my ribs that would have broken a lighter man in two. I only laughed at him and met his next rush with a right under the heart that bent his ribs in.

It was the toughest kind of fighting. Sharkey was furious. He never seemed to tire. When I drove my right fist against his ribs his mouth opened and he gasped, but a tenth of a second later he'd be jumping at me again like a bulldog trying for a throat hold. He was so anxious that three or four



SHARKEY SWUNG ON MY JAW AS HARD
AS HE COULD.

times he swung on me after the gong at the end of the round. He didn't mean to foul me. He was too full of fight to hold in.

Along in the eighth round Tom swung one into my ribs that made me double up for a moment and drove the breath out of me so hard that it made me grunt. He kept rushing and jumping in on me all the time, although he was getting a fierce beating about the body. I had given up the idea of knocking Sharkey out in short order now and was fighting cautiously.

The heat from the lights was terrible. It was worse than noon in the desert. All around the ring men had taken off their coats and collars and rolled up their shirt sleeves. The sweat rolled off Sharkey and myself in streams. When I landed on him the gloves slipped as if he was greased. Along about the fifteenth Sharkey landed a right on my nose that flat-

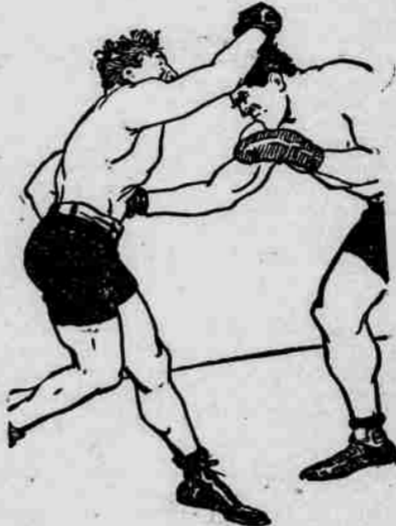
tened it and made me bleed hard. He started another. This time I hooked him on the jaw and staggered him.

In the nineteenth round we both tried hard for a knockout. Sharkey landed his left wrist like a club on my neck and nearly lifted my head off. I retaliated by swinging my right on his ear so that it bulged up and began bleeding.

As we came within a couple of rounds of the finish Billy Brady begged me to rush and try for a knockout. It was a close fight. In the twenty-fourth I had Tom tottering after a punch on the chin. He clinched and hung on desperately and stalled the round out, backing away from me almost for the first time in the fight.

The twenty-fifth and last round was a terror. We stepped up and shook hands, and then Tom was at me with another rush. I threw up my left arm and whipped my right into his ribs, and he gasped with mouth wide open. I landed on his chin with my right hard enough to knock any ordinary man out for half an hour. Tom fell in on me and clinched. He held on a long time. At last I pulled his arms down and shoved him away. Then I went in as hard as I could for a knockout.

The first punch hurled Sharkey nearly through the ropes. He bounced back and caught my left wrist under his arm and held tight. I punched him with the right, and he went down, pulling my left glove off as he fell. He was up in a moment. Meanwhile I had backed away and waved my bare hand to Referee Siler, who step-



I DIDN'T KNOW THREE OF SHARKEY'S
RIBS HAD BEEN CRUSHED IN.

ped in and tried to put the glove on. Sharkey ran in. Siler shouted to him to keep off and pushed him back.

Time was flying fast, and Siler could not get the glove untied to pull it on my fist. Tom couldn't stand the suspense. He dodged around Siler and jumped at me. I waved my hand at him and then, seeing that he wouldn't stop, jabbed him away. And then the bell rang. Tom took one more swing at me after the bell for good measure and walked to his corner. Siler gave me the decision. It was a very close thing at that. Sharkey had fought aggressively all the way, but many of his swings were wild, while my blows seldom missed the mark. I came through the fight very little damaged, while Sharkey, with his broken ribs and battered body, never reached the same fine fighting trim again and after being beaten by Ruhlman and Fitzsimmons retired from the ring.

I take off my hat to Tom Sharkey. He was as game a man as I ever saw in a ring.

Jim Corbett wanted a chance to win back his old title, and so I gave it to him. We were matched to fight twenty-five rounds at Coney Island on the night of May 11. In taking on Corbett I was just keeping to my program. Long before I beat Fitzsimmons I made up my mind that if I were ever champion I'd defend my title whenever a good man came along and challenged me if any one cared to offer a purse. Every champion ought to do this or retire from the game.

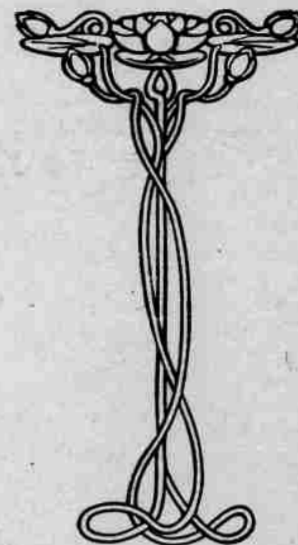
The public wanted to see me fight Corbett. I'd shown that I could beat a scientific puncher like Fitzsimmons and a rough fighter like Sharkey. Now they wanted to see if I could do anything with a lightning fast boxer who wouldn't slug with me like the other two. The fight fans thought Jim was a back number, but they were satisfied to see what kind of a showing he could make as long as he lasted.

Corbett didn't go to pieces like other champions after being beaten at Carson. He took pretty good care of himself. He'd had one fight with Sharkey since then and had lost on a foul when Connie McVey jumped into the ring. But that didn't make the fans forget what a great boxer he was.

As soon as the match was made Jim went down to Lakewood and started training. Ten weeks before our fight he sent for Gus Ruhlman, and during this last ten weeks of training he and Gus fought every day just as hard as if they were in the ring. Corbett had a notion that he'd have to fight for his life against me and that real fighting was the best work to get him back into the old shape. He was about right too.

While Corbett was working hard I did more or less traveling around. A little over a month before our fight a big fellow named Jack Finnegan stood up to me in Detroit and took the count in less than a round. No class to that fight. When I was through with Finnegan I hiked back to New York and in a few days was hard at work in the same old training quarters where I had prepared for the fight with Fitzsimmons. It seemed good to get back to real work again. My brother Jack was with me, and all of the old training staff except Delaney.

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