

# The Harlem Hurricane

Jack Dempsey Barnstorming Runs Up Against the Harlem Hurricane and is K.O.'d in the Most Sensational Boxing Match of the Season. Hurricane is Getting "Good."

By EDWARD LAWSON

WHAT HAS HAPPENED: Billy Allen signs up Marty Bell, whom we nickname the Harlem Hurricane, as an addition to his stable of boxers, and turns him over to me for training. I work with him a couple of months, and finally we get a fight for him with Wally Palmer, ace Harlem heavyweight. The Hurricane vanquish the Wildcat in six rounds, and from that time on he makes steady progress toward the heavyweight title.

His inspiration, as you might say, is a girl named Martha Taylor, who is rooting for him in a big way. She has promised to marry him as soon as he has ten thousand dollars in the bank, and he is out to win the ten grand. After wiping up all the New York opposition, we decide to make a tour of the West in order to gain extra prestige and box-office value for the Hurricane, and in his bouts throughout the country he is uniformly successful.

Finally we land in Los Angeles, where after he defeats Whipper Burns, leading West coast contender for the crown, he is reported engaged to Edna Masters, one of the leading colored screen actresses. The report astounds Billy Allen and myself, and we cannot understand how it came about.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY:

## CHAPTER VII

I hunted up the Hurricane and stuck the paper before his eyes. "What does all this mean?" I asked him. "Since when are you planning to middle-aisle it with Edna Masters, huh?"

"Edna Masters?" he repeated blankly. He looked at me bewildered, then turned to read the

headline. "Why," he said, "I don't even know Edna Masters, except that I met her and we danced a little at that night club last night. I'd heard a lot about her, and I'd seen her in a picture or two, but that was all."

"Then there's nothing at all to the story?"

"Not so far as I know of."

I breathed a little easier. "But still," I said, "I don't see how a thing like that could be started so soon, and get around so fast. Where'd the yarn come from, in the first place?"

"You can search me," the Hurricane declared.

I turned to the telephone and called the theatrical editor of the paper in which the story had appeared. "Where'd you get that story about Edna Masters and the Hurricane being engaged?" I asked him.

"Miss Masters's press agent gave it to me," he told me. "What's wrong with it?"

"In the first place," I growled, "it isn't true. The Hurricane only met Miss Masters last night, and only knows her as a casual acquaintance. Besides, he happens to be engaged to somebody else. Isn't that enough?"

"Well, what does it matter?" the



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editor protested. "Maybe it ain't all true. It's a swell publicity stunt anyway, even for your boy. His picture will be plastered over every sports page from here to Harlem. You just watch."

"Year?" I sneered. "Well, I don't like that sort of cheap publicity. It's all right for Miss Masters, maybe, but just leave the Hurricane out of it."

"Do you want me to run a denial tomorrow?" the editor asked. "Just don't say anything more about it—that's all I ask. Forget the whole thing—let it die a natural death." I dropped the receiver onto its hook.

The report of the Hurricane's rumored engagement, I found later, had spread like wildfire across the country. To deny it would only cause further glaring publicity, so Billy Allen and I decided to keep quiet. We made plans to leave Los Angeles and to head back for the East Coast.

But meanwhile, Billy had a brilliant idea. Jack Dempsey, the great one himself, was in Reno, Nevada, at the time, trying to stage some sort of a comeback. He appeared to be ready and willing to take on all contenders—for a price. Billy decided that a victory over Jack was just what the Hurricane needed to better his already excellent reputation. So on the way East, we stopped off at Reno.

Billy dropped in to see Jack's manager and asked for a fight. He painted the Hurricane in glowing colors and showed him the record our boy had compiled in the ten months he had worked for us.

"The Hurricane can lick Dempsey any day in the week," Billy went on earnestly. "You come around and look him over, give us the fight, and clean up any way you want to. But—give us the fight."

"Go out and get yourselves a reputation," Jack's manager growled at us. "How do you expect me to believe all that stuff you're handin' out?"

And for a week that was all we got out of the Manassa Mauler's manager. Of course, we could understand his attitude, and didn't blame him a bit for the stand he had taken. Dempsey was on his way up the ladder again, and his opponents had to be hand-picked to avoid a calamity. One setback, especially at the hands of some unknown, might even ruin his reputation entirely. The great Jack couldn't afford to take any chances.

We stayed around Reno two weeks, the Hurricane meanwhile going through his regular daily routine in a small gymnasium which Billy hired for the purpose, waiting for a more definite reply to our

challenge. Then finally it came. We met the Mauler's manager at the Gloved Hand Club, and made terms.

"I guess you can have the scrap, if you're so hot after it," Jack's manager said. "The Kid needs the money badly, and he's ready to fight anybody, almost. All he wants is an 85-15 split of the gate, 85 to the winner and 15 to the loser, or a 70-30 break, win, lose, or draw."

"I see," said Billy. "Well, do you think you'll take us up?"

"I sure will!" Billy grinned. "We'll take the 85-15, and we'll let you pick your own referee. That O.K.?"

"O.K.," replied the other. The two men hitched up their chairs and Billy drew up an agreement which the other read and signed.

Two weeks later, the bout was on!

## CHAPTER VIII

"Now, Big Boy, here's your chance," I told the Hurricane as I supervised the wrapping of his hands before we went down to the ring. "This is worth ten grand to the winner easily, and I've got five thousand on a side bet—on you. Clean up, and you can have a bank account big enough to get married and buy a house on the bargain. All you've got to do is to look out for his right and play for his wind. Don't bother with his face—you can't hurt it with an axe. But make him bring the fight to you—tire him out. He's gettin' old now, and can't take it like he used to."

"I get you," the Hurricane growled. Billy Allen came hurrying in with the news that the last preliminary was over and that they were waiting for us.

We marched down the aisle amid a salvo of applause and climbed into the ring. The shirt-sleeved referee made his announcement; the futile challenges of has-beens and would-bes were disposed of. The preliminary had been good, and the crowds' appetite was whetted. Dempsey was, of course, the favorite as far as betting was concerned, but there were vague whisperings of big money being bet on the Hurricane.

Dempsey was undoubtedly getting old. No one ever really believed that he was capable of a comeback. Yet, pressed for money, he had tried, and up to now had been remarkably successful. While not still the great boxer he had been, he still had the old powerful right-handed kick that did deadly execution. And here was this unknown, with hardly any reputation, ready to furnish another stone upon which the Mauler might step in his path back to title heights.

There was silence for just an instant as the two dressing-gowned figures took their places after the brief conference with the referee. The ring was cleared and the two men threw off their bathrobes and sat calmly while the gloves were being laced onto their hands. Then the referee called them to the center again, inspected their gloves, and sent them back to their corners. Then the gong!

A hurried touching of gloves in the center of the ring, then Dempsey dropped to his crouching position, his warthy face and cauliflower ear sunk low on one shoulder, his eyes squinted, half closed. The Hurricane was standing straight up, his left hand fully extended, his right drawn far back. He was, to all appearances, "wide open."

"This guy's easy," I heard one of the reporters say. "Jack's gonna take him for a merry ride."

Dempsey inched forward gently into hitting position. There was a lithe spring and his left lead flashed out. The Hurricane hard-

ly moved, yet the glove struck over his shoulder and his own countered heavily, but a bit too high, under Dempsey's arm.

"Boy! Did you see that?" one reporter was waking up now. "Some fast action! It might even turn into a fight."

The great Dempsey grunted. He lashed out that right of his, and the heavy glove apparently crashed straight into the Hurricane's face. The crowd yelled, but the ringsiders knew that when the blow had landed, the black head had been drawn back just enough to take the force out. And they guessed what the crowd didn't know—that the lashing return had made Dempsey's head ring as it had not rung since Gene Tunney had him down for the long count in Chicago some years before.

There were only two telling blows struck during that round. Both men were holding in, feeling each other out gently, almost timidly. But as the scrap warmed up in the second, both began to unleash some of their pent-up energy, and as round by round went by, the spectators had plenty to keep them from being bored.

Dempsey was, it must be admitted, a mere shadow of his former self; yet he landed plenty of good hard punches. And he took plenty, too. For the Hurricane was lamming into him with blows that really hurt, and Dempsey was just a trifle too slow to escape their full force.

Or rather, the Hurricane was just a trifle too fast for him. The black head moved, shifted, then drew back. He watched carefully, saw a blow coming, and took his head out of the way before it could land, sending back a sizzling uppercut, a jabbing counter with his left, or a right across which made the Mauler grunt more than once. Occasionally Jack came in to mix it, swinging two-handed, into a crouch, struggling hard to get his old piston-rod right going against my boy's stomach. But always there was a

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