

Preface: The Series Continues

Welcome to the world of the fight to the finish, where championship bouts continued until someone was knocked out, where there were no mouthpieces, no handwraps, no protective foul cups, no training headgear, where floors and ring posts were often hard, when gloves were only five ounces and the eight-ounce glove was considered a big pillow to only be used in friendly exhibitions, when fights were never stopped on cuts, when a fight was rarely stopped just because a guy was a little wobbly or because he went down a number of times, where even decisions were based on who did the most damage and was the more aggressive, not just based on who knew how to tap, run, grab and survive. This was a time when your pay depended on success, when the phrase 'winner take all' was not just a bluff. These were some tough guys.

This is the third book in my heavyweight champion series, *Reigns of Fame and Shame*. The first two were *John L. Sullivan: The Career of the First Gloved Heavyweight Champion*, and *In the Ring With James J. Corbett*. My goal has been to answer the questions that no other book answered. I wanted history based not on speculation, hearsay, and legend, but based on what local reports said at the time.

I have found that achieving the richest and most complete understanding of these fighters' careers is accomplished by reference to multiple local primary source accountings. These accounts enliven the opponents and the fights, offer new facts, discuss issues that secondary sources failed to consider, and give fresh perspective on matters previously only discussed in a limited or incomplete way. Greater than ever before, this book offers a much stronger understanding of Bob Fitzsimmons' career, skills, and ability, and the era's fight scene, including top contenders and the legal, political, and social issues which affected the fight game.

Using mostly local contemporary newspaper reports, this book provides a more thorough analysis and detailed discussion of:

Bob Fitzsimmons' many Australian bouts. Local Australian primary sources shed new light on Fitz's early career, and show the long road he took to stardom. Because so many of the era's great fighters were produced in Australia, to understand the world's fight scene one must be familiar with Australian boxing.

Fitz's alleged fixed fight with Jim Hall. Find out whether Bob took a dive.

The legal and political fallout from the deaths of Con Riordan and Andy Bowen.

The alleged fixed fight with Tom Sharkey. The behind the scenes story is itself worth the price of admission. The court battle and all the sensational testimony are fully covered. Was it a grand conspiracy?

The complete back and forth verbal jousting, taunting, and confident exclamations between Fitzsimmons and Jim Corbett. No other fight ever had as much free advertising and hot discussion as a result of its mouthy combatants. They were the kings of smack talk, the inventors of building up fights with verbal and even physical confrontation.

The unbelievable legal and political battles the boxers and promoter Dan Stuart had to go through in order to bring fights off. This story has governors, armed militiamen, and judges threatening violence and lengthy prison sentences, following, chasing, and arresting these men, and generally impeding the sport's progress in any way that they could.

All of Fitzsimmons' American fights and most of his exhibitions (up to the heavyweight championship), including lesser known and previously unknown bouts, and massive pre- and post-fight coverage of his most significant bouts. This also includes Fitz and Corbett's daily training regimen leading up to their big fight. Even new controversial facts about the Corbett fight are revealed.

I hope you enjoy learning about Bob Fitzsimmons as much as I did!