

The Royal Rooter



The sword bearer jumped to his feet and started in to yell in his native tongue

By
SINBAD

At the ball park, the Caliph discards dignity for the moment—but then didn't his peoples contribute much to the national game?

IT WAS the beginning of the third inning, and the Commander of the Faithful was in happy mood.

"One thing, Sinbad, that pleases me about your great national game," he said, "is to find that we from the other side of the world have contributed something to its development."

I turned to stare at him, though respectfully.

"Inimitable One," I said, "you mean that baseball is not really derived from one-old-cat? You suggest that the game originated in Central Asia about the year 450 B. C., like pretty nearly everything else except the Anti-Saloon League?"

He shook his head.

"That would be claiming too much," he said. "What I have in mind is our contribution to the vocabulary of the

game. Naturally I have read up on the subject in your daily press. And it is astonishing how many references I encountered to the Sultan of Swat, the Maharajah of Maul, the Begum of Bing, and similar Oriental dignitaries. Imagine the thrill when I found one of your players—last year he batted .341—described as the Caliph of Concussion. That came very close to home, Sinbad."

At this moment the sword bearer Mesrour, who was sitting on one side of His Majesty, jumped to his feet and started in to yell in his native tongue. Zimmermann was at bat for the Blue Sox, and the count was two and three.

"Wahabi ibn saud fatima yemen mustapha aleppo il-Akhbar!" howled Mesrour.

The good fellow's fists were clenched and beating time. His mouth, at a reasonable estimate, was six inches agape. His eyes were half out of their sockets. Altogether he suggested an imminent case of cerebral hemorrhage. I turned to His Majesty for enlightenment.

The Successor smiled.

"Mesrour is beseeching the man with the club to murder the ball," explained the Caliph. "He is imploring him to smite the spheroid on the nose in the name of Allah. My good Mesrour's emotions are not always under perfect control."

With the moral backing of Mesrour and 19,000 other spectators similarly afflicted, Zimmermann met a straight one and drove it to deep center. When he was safe on second Mesrour expressed his gratitude to Allah with a climactic howl and a few excerpts from what appeared to be a Polynesian war dance.

"Your Majesty has favored us with a profound observation," said the gentleman on the Caliph's right. He was the associate editor of one of the intellectual weeklies from which words of less than six syllables are rigidly excluded. He was now engaged upon an intensive study of the recreations of the hoi polloi with special reference to herd morale and mob hysteria. Along that line he had already investigated the movies, the vaudeville stage, the comic strip and our leading jazz orchestras.

The editor continued.

"Your Majesty has no doubt observed," he said, "that an unconditioned emotional discharge such as your faithful sword bearer has just indulged in constitutes a characteristic sign of the imperfectly integrated reflex mechanism of the great masses of the populace. To those privileged to live on a higher plane of susceptibility reaction is possible only to stimuli of a finer—"

He did not finish his sentence. Zimmermann had slid feet foremost into third on an attempted steal, and the referee was calling him out. Behind me I heard a familiar voice raised in the native Mesopotamian dialect.

"Omar Kemal i wadi!" the voice shrieked. "Imam! Bismillah! Askari il hasdrubal!"

I turned to look. It was His Majesty, Harun-al-Rashid, Commander of the Faithful, Successor to the Prophet, Prince of the Oxus, Guardian of the Kaaba, and Defender of the Holy Trade Routes; and he was expressing himself with all the reticence of a Comanche with delirium tremens.

"What is he saying?" I inquired discreetly of the Counsel on Public Relations.

C. P. R. translated literally:

"The Exalted One is saying, 'Robber, Thief, Burglar!' He is saying, 'You big crook, get yourself a pair of binoculars!'"

The Caliph sank back into his seat out of breath and a trifle ashamed, I thought. He began to talk rapidly, addressing himself to the editor.

"There is much truth in what you say, Robinson Effendi," said the Caliph. "The emotional reflex in a game so uncertain as baseball—How hot the sun is getting to be!"

What Baseball Is

THE editor must have been searching for the proper psychoanalytic reply, for he remained silent, and it was the Counsel on Public Relations who intervened.

"Luminescence," said C. P. R., "not an uncertain game. If anything, the game of baseball represents the triumph of the higher mathematics. Nowhere else on earth are there so many men capable of demonstrating at the beginning of the season that if the Athletics win 140 out of their 154 games and the Senators lose 123 games out of 152 the Athletics will beat out the Senators for the flag, providing, of course, the Athletics' pitching staff can stand the pace. In the

last two weeks of the season, Delightful One, there are millions of men in this country who carry about with them little slips of paper inscribed with such numbers as .00000456. This is the margin by which the Blue Sox will finish ahead of the Antelopes if the Blue Sox win all of their remaining 9 games while the Antelopes are taking 2 out of 11."

"Athletics, Senators, Blue Sox, Antelopes," murmured the Caliph and turned to the editor. "I find something extremely attractive in the picturesque appellations of your baseball teams; your Giants and your Reds and your Pirates and your Tigers and your Antelopes. It is fine to think of men battling and dying under their hereditary totems and for the altars of their sires, so to speak."

Dolan Does His Duty

IT IS so," said the editor, but without enthusiasm. Plainly he found it hard to overlook the Successor's recent display of vulgar reflex action. I hastened to inject myself into the situation.

"Great One," I said, "if you will pardon me, altars of their sires is overstating it somewhat. Zimmermann, whose magnificent effort for the Blue Sox Your Majesty was just admiring, came to the team three weeks ago in a trade with the Antelopes. He was born in South Africa—"

The editor's face lit up.

"Your Highness," he said, "Sinbad has stumbled, doubtless unwittingly, on a truth of pregnant significance. It is a regrettable fact that our gladiators of the diamond are actuated by the instinct for service. That is why it is so difficult for anyone endowed with the finer æsthetic reactions to find a real thrill in—"

He did not finish. Dolan for the Antelopes had come to bat chewing violently. He stepped out to meet the first one pitched and sent it zooming, high and inside, for the right fence. The editor was on his feet and expressing himself in words of only one or two syllables.

"Wow!" he said. "Oh, baby! Watch it! Oh, what a bingo!"

Ultimately he sat down, together with approximately 19,000 other lunatics, and he tried to look as if he had been quoting from the Principles of Psychology, by William James. And there was no one there in the mood to make it hard for him. In this manner we sat quietly enough until the third man for the visitors was out in the seventh inning. The Caliph had not studied the sporting pages for nothing. He was among the first to get to his feet and stretch.

"But why not emotion, Robinson Effendi?" he said to the editor. "Emotion is the essence of religion, and is not this a religious act we are this moment engaged in? We are a congregation of 19,000 people. And all over your great country at this moment are similar congregations engaged in this impressive democratic seventh-inning rite. It is stupendous."

It was on the point of my tongue to remind His Majesty that he was overstating the case somewhat because while it was 4:15 P. M. where we were it was only 3:15 in Chicago, 2:15 in Denver and 1:15 in San Francisco. But it occurred to me that such a remark would come more appropriately from the editor of the intellectual weekly; and, besides, in substance the Commander of the Faithful was right.

Waiting for the Gong

By GRANTLAND RICE

Anything can happen when two big heavyweights meet where a million dollars swings in the summer breeze

YES, it is true enough that John L. Sullivan was backed at 5 to 1 to beat Jim Corbett—and Corbett won.

It is also true that Corbett was favored by 3 to 1 to beat Fitzsimmons and the Freckled One knocked him out in fourteen rounds.

Shortly after that, big, awkward Jim Jeffries, with only eleven fights under his belt, was rated as a set-up for Fitz and the California Grizzly won with a knockout in eleven rounds.

The betting favored Jeffries to beat Jack Johnson, which he didn't do, and the odds on Dempsey to beat Tunney were 3 or 4 to 1.

Favoring odds apparently can travel in a number of wrong directions where the glamour of the champion obscures sound judgment and the glint from the regal coronet of pugilism shines in the observer's wavering eyes.

Once again the odds favor the champion as Gene Tunney steps out to defend his title as heavyweight king against Tom Heeney, the Hard Rock from Down Under.

It has been just thirty-one years since a British heavyweight worked his way into the challenger's seat for a shot at the main plum. In 1897 Bob Fitzsimmons, an Australian Cornishman or a Cornish Australian, lifted the crown from Jim Corbett's pompadour at Carson City.

Most of the British heavyweights since Fitz's day have been pushovers for the nearest fist, no matter who propelled it. Carpentier wrecked Bombardier Wells and Joe Beckett in a round or two, and Knute Hansen spilled Phil Scott at the first jump over here. Yet Scott out-pointed Heeney at their last meeting, and here Heeney is fighting for the title.

For all that it must be admitted here and now that there is nothing of the pushover connected with Heeney. He isn't the best and fastest boxer that ever lived, and no one can accuse him of being the world's heaviest hitter, but the New Zealand Irishman can take as much as Gibraltar. They have all hit him with one thing or another, but so far he has been harder to dent than a granite post.

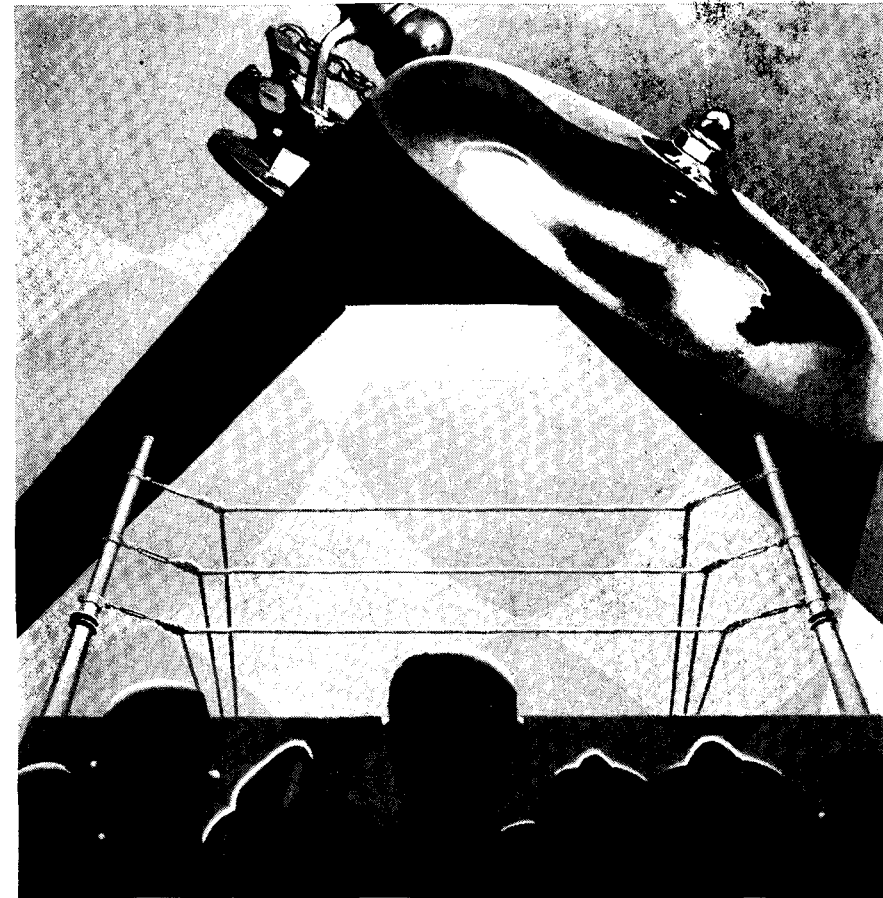
Tunney and Heeney are now entering the final training zone for their approaching war, and when you sum up the evidence Tunney ought to be a sure thing.

He Has Made His Million

HE IS a better boxer than Heeney and a better puncher with both hands. He is just as game and just about as durable. He has just as much stamina and is somewhat smarter under fire.

But in the last two years and a half Tunney has fought just twenty rounds against a wide-open, rushing fighter who was made to order for the Tunney system. He has won and defended the title, he has made his million and he hasn't cared an awful lot for the pomp and ceremony of the crown. Tunney was at his best in Philadelphia in 1926—he was sliding at Chicago in 1927—and there is no set reason to believe he will be advancing upward again in New York.

The outward evidence is so strongly in Tunney's favor that he ought to be a 1 to 10 shot, but while Tunney has



If a hurricane follows the gong, it will be a cheerful surprise

had two short fights in two and a half years, Heeney has faced nine fights in the last eighteen months and it is in action, under fire, that shock troops are made ready for assault. Heeney has faced two clever boxers in Sharkey and Delaney and two rough actors in Risko and Paulino and none of them has whipped him yet.

This evidence is not entered as any ballyhoo for another More-Than-a-Million gate. For the contest offers no advance sign of drama or excitement. Tunney has never been rated as any killing wallower, and in sixty or more rounds against Delaney, Sharkey, Paulino and Risko the current or fiscal challenger failed to leave a headache in his opponent's corner.

The only man he stopped abruptly was Jimmy Maloney, and it took no crowbar at that time to drop James. They have all been dropping him ever since Sharkey started the fad. Tunney is a jolting, damaging puncher who can cut and jar but he has never been any part of a Dempsey at the thumping act.

A Stolid Pair

HE KNOWS how to hit, but he works on the conservative side where self-defense is the first principle. He might have stopped Dempsey in the fourth round at Chicago, but he wasn't willing

to trade an uppercut against the chance of a left hook, even when Dempsey looked as groggy as a half-drowned Airedale. Tunney cut up Dempsey's face badly in both fights with right and left chops and jabs that were backed up by a shoulder snap which the crowd missed. He was shooting his fists only ten or twelve inches for these face massages, but he was putting 190 pounds back of the impetus.

If Heeney can hit, he has been saving the Big Bertha stuff for this show. The New Zealand invader is game, tough, aggressive, hard to hurt and able to set a fast pace for fifteen rounds. He is just a pretty fair boxer who knows his leather goods. But anything can happen when two big heavyweights meet where a million dollars happens to be swinging in the summer breeze.

There has been no great amount of drama hooked to Tunney, and there has been even less attached to Heeney. So if a hurricane breaks out it will be a cheerful surprise and a bigger upset than if Heeney should win.

So far as temperament goes there have never been two fighters with nervous systems under such control. Tunney hopped into a plane and flew to his Philadelphia fight, nodding and smiling to his friends at the ringside as if he were at a literary lecture. At Chicago he read a book until called to take a motor for the ring in Soldiers'

Field, and he was even more unconcerned there than he was at Philadelphia.

The old Hard Rock travels under even less tension. One fight has always been the same to him as any other. Where Jack Dempsey last summer was driving himself with a whirl of hard work and nervous energy to get ready, even after many months of hard training, Heeney announced that he had no intention of leaving his fight in any blink-in' gymnasium and that he could be ready to go with two weeks' work.

He has worked longer than that, but if his pulses have taken on an extra jump he has concealed the fluttering from any peering eye. He came over here expecting to look around and possibly pick up enough change to get on home. His first fight was velvet. So were the others. The Tunney engagement was velvet, win, lose or draw. So Heeney doesn't see anything to get excited about.

Whatever happens, he is still a long way ahead of what he ever dreamed might happen. In place of the loser's end in one fight he got nine fights and nobody beat him, although Paulino drew a decision against him.

When you begin to figure out a character of this sort you have to look beyond the visible signs. If you go to these, you can't give him a chance against Tunney. Even his style is more suited to the Tunney method than either Risko's or Sharkey's or Paulino's. But any son of destiny who can march along as Heeney has marched the last eighteen months is not to be regarded lightly.

Just Another Fight for Heeney

HEENEY has a way of setting a fairly fast, steady pace which he maintains to the finish. He sets his clip and holds it as Nurmi runs. There isn't any hanging back nor any spurting forward. He merely keeps his even stride. It may run into monotony at times but it's annoying to any opponent. There is no change of pace, no shifting of speed. In his other fights this method has had a depressing effect on his opponents after the first few rounds.

It might be noted that Heeney is a better boxer than Dempsey, harder to hit and just as hard to hurt. Jack Delaney might as well have left his right hand at home. He admitted that he couldn't get it by Heeney's guard. So while Tunney can outbox Heeney and outhit him, if the champion has lost any of the vital spark, any of the flame he felt against Dempsey, he will have his trouble getting through.

It is easy to figure why Tunney ought to win about twelve of the fifteen rounds, if he is the same Tunney, not only outwardly but inwardly. It isn't so easy to figure where Heeney might break through because his chance is in the psychological zone that isn't so easily explained.

The Tunney of Philadelphia could have won fifteen rounds from the Heeney who has been fighting around New York for a year. But no one ever saw the Dempsey of Toledo again, and Dempsey was then only twenty-four. Tunney is now thirty, rich, content and none too crazy about his trade. Heeney, on the other side, has done far better than he ever thought he could do and whatever happens it is all on the plus side in his ledger.