

Kid Lavigne Speaks From the Distant Past

George “Kid” Lavigne, boxing’s first world lightweight champion, nicknamed the “Saginaw Kid,” dominated the lightweight class throughout the decade of the 1890s. Lavigne’s storied ring career began with his first fight in 1886. He was undefeated in 41 fights over a 10 year span when he won the world championship by defeating “Iron Man” Dick Burge of England in 1896. Living the “fast” life ultimately cost him his championship laurels when he was outpointed by Frank Erne in 1899.

The “Kid” was a very popular figure in his time, running with the likes of John L. Sullivan and “Gentleman Jim” Corbett. He was often quoted by newspapers across the country in his prime and up to his death in 1928. Most boxing experts then and now consider him to be one of the greatest pugilists of any era. He retired from the ring in 1910. It was a *Milwaukee Evening Wisconsin* article of March 1912 that first hinted of Lavigne’s plan to write a “tell all” of his career when it wrote, “Lavigne will publish a book of his ring career in a couple of months, in which he promises to spring a sensation regarding his fight with Jimmy Britt.”

Lavigne never wrote that book. George Lavigne is my cousin and after several years of painstaking research I published *Muscle and Mayhem: The Saginaw Kid and the Fistic World of the 1890s*, in 2013, the book the Kid promised 101 years earlier. The book is available from the website www.kidlavigne.com or through Amazon. Being addicted to everything Kid Lavigne I continue to this day to look for information on his life and career that I may have missed.

A few months ago I stumbled on a reference to a 1913 Copyright record that cryptically mentioned George Lavigne and “chapter 1.” Of course I thought I’d found the book. But it was not to be. I tracked the record to a series of eleven articles published in the Dayton Journal, a daily newspaper out of Dayton, Ohio that ran from 1905 to 1949. While the articles are far from a comprehensive account of Lavigne’s career they do cover some of his most memorable fights including his bout for the world championship and his two epic battles with the “Barbados Demon,” Joe Walcott. All but the first article, an introduction written by a journalist for the Dayton Journal and a personal friend of the Kid’s, are written in his own words. Where the Kid’s recollections differ with current boxing records of the time I indicate that in brackets.

Take a step back in time and read a first-person account from one of boxing’s all-time greats, the Saginaw Kid. The following are the word-for-word transcriptions of the original newspaper articles presented in two parts.

Lauran Chouinard

PART ONE

Kid Lavigne Took the Fatal Count but Once

In Writing Introduction of Famous Fighter's Career, E. Dacey Wilmont Clears Up Some of the Blots on Boxer's Escutcheon

By E. Dacey Wilmont – A lifelong friend of George (Kid) Lavigne

It is a matter of very great pleasure to me to be called upon to contribute introductory words to the life of my old friend, George Lavigne, which he, himself, has compiled and written. This opportunity enables me to call attention to a few facts concerning the life of "the greatest lightweight champion of all time," hitherto unknown to the sporting public and all those interested in boxing.

In the first place there appears in the compiled records of three boxers, knockout claims over Lavigne. The truth of the matter is, George Lavigne never took the count but once and I challenge any referee or sporting writer to refute that statement. The fighters credited with such knockouts are Mysterious Billy Smith, Young Erne, Jimmy Britt, and George McFadden.

In the battle with Mysterious Billy Smith, the Kid was deliberately robbed of his laurels. True, Lavigne received severe punishment in that fight, but not of the weakening character administered to him in previous battles by Joe Walcott. When Lavigne reproached his second (who, by the way was his own brother) for throwing up the sponge, the claim was made that he thought the Kid was getting too weak to fight longer. In all fairness the mill should have been awarded to Lavigne in several of the early rounds on fouls deliberately and frequently indulged in by Smith, who preferred to lose by this route rather than by a knockout or by a decision. You will bear in mind that in parimutuel betting on the fight, the better calling the turn of the round ending the mill might have gotten odds of 10 to 1 for his money.

Lavigne's own brother was his second on this occasion. However, he is now dead, and for charitable reasons, accusations at this time will be necessarily veiled. George Lavigne is naturally a reticent chap, far from being vindictive, and hence would rather let the matter rest.

STUNG IN FIGHT WITH BRITT

Another clear case of "throw down" in which the Kid was made the victim, was when he fought Jimmy Britt. Although Lavigne does not accuse Britt or his brother Willus as being part and parcel of the group of tricksters who encompassed his own fall on this occasion, he does not place his brother, alluded to in the Smith affair, above suspicion. The Kid truthfully states the facts of the traitorous matter in the course of his life story.

The injury that Lavigne received in the fight with Britt had a lasting effect on his physical powers and he was never the same rugged fellow that he was when he fought Bowen, Burge and others.

I have followed his career very closely and I think that the average fight fan will agree with me that the Kid was an ideal American champion, sincere, aggressive and with a fighting spirit that may

never be excelled. He was modest, also, and to the question generally asked when he was about to enter the ring: "Kid, are you going to win tonight?" The reply was always the same – "Well, there are going to be two of us in the ring. The other fellow is a good man, but if I went in alone I could win." That is George Lavigne, extremely modest at all times.

The Kid was one of those rare beings that seemed never to know when he was defeated. It is a question if he ever was. When he fought Joe Wolcott the first time, the referee would have been justified in calling the fight about the seventh round. George, himself, would not admit this as he did not mind any of those terrific blows of which he received so many. Blood flowed from the faces and bodies of both contestants and from the spectators' view the Kid was a hopelessly beaten man, yet with a strong heart and Roman courage he carried the fight to Wolcott and inch by inch he edged on him, meeting punch and blood for blood. Never in the history of the prize ring was there such a magnificent display of gameness, and when in the closing round, with Wolcott staggering helplessly, the gong sounded, but the Kid stood there waiting.

ALWAYS READY TO FIGHT

There was that in his attitude which impressed the audience that he had wonderful vitality in reserve and courage to draw upon. He was ever full of fight, a sure enough champion in my estimation and a battler whose achievements, in my estimation, will never be excelled.

In his second fight with Wolcott, Joe broke two of the Kid's main ribs on the left side. With those ribs broken he faltered not nor hesitated, but with the same courage he went on and on. That was the hardest test of his career. Almost fainting from the terrible pain, when he came to the corner he would rise at the sound of the gong and go out and do battle with the black giant killer, and weak as he was, he beat him so unmercifully that Wolcott's second threw the sponge in the ring settling forever all questions as to their respective ability.

In the earlier rounds of the first fight, John L. Sullivan, who was a spectator bellowed out, "Take that poor boy away from that black demon." "Never mind Sully," said the Kid. "I'm alright; I'll get him yet." "It's a shame," retorted John L., "putting that boy against that big black gorilla. Take him away. Take him away." "Oh murder!" rambled John L. as Wolcott slammed another terrific punch in. "Take him off." "What's the matter Sully?" answered the Kid. "He is not hurting me; I will beat him sure." And in the thirteenth round both men were weak and Wolcott was up against the ropes. The Kid ripped his right hand to his jaw knocking his head to one side. "Bang," came his left to the other side. "Rip," came a blow to the stomach. "Don't you quit you black devil," said Tom O'Rourke to Wolcott. Joe rolled his eyes to one side saying, "For God's sake boss, what can I do?"

THEY CARRIED JOSEPH

But he stayed there to the finish as hard as it was coming. At the end of the fourteenth round the Kid in his weakened condition wobbled to his corner unassisted, but Wolcott was carried by his seconds to his corner. In the same round John L. Sullivan roared out, "Kill him Kid, kill him." Sullivan evidently had a change of heart, and in the fifteenth round while thousands were holding their breath the Kid came in with added strength for victory was just ahead of him and tore into the black demon. Wolcott however was game, and with his magnificent physique stayed until the end of the round.

Every second seemed an hour, but staggering and gasping he stalled while the Kid kept boring in. Then the gong sounded ending one of the most spectacular fights that the world has ever known. It is a significant fact that after this fight, Wolcott defeated Joe Choynski, knocking the heavyweight out in seven rounds.

Can you picture in your mind the physical difference in these two model gladiators of the ring? One with muscles not so very noticeable, slender of body and pale faced but with a fighting spirit and impatient and eager to go out to a most certain defeat without a particle of fear or hesitancy and without a sign of nervousness while thousands of hearts surrounding the ring were sick with suspense and dread. Dread of what? Of that other – a black whirlwind of destruction. The most magnificently muscled statue of ebony that ever stepped his foot into a prize ring and with a record of victories that made heavyweights turn aside and pass him on to the next human sacrifice.

Dread of an absolute certain defeat, the white gladiator from Michigan, cool and undaunted, stood there while strong men wished that they had not entered the auditorium that night. But when the tide of the battle turned those same strong men were as hysterical as school girls and hugged each other, their wild transport of joy. The battle evoked the most remarkable demonstration that the ring has ever known. In traversing the gamut from fear to realization of hopes undreamed, those about the ring became delirious.

I remember as the gong sounded for the beginning of hostilities the Kid arose eagerly, and facing his friends with a smile on his lips, he waved his hands to them calling to mind the gladiators of old who were about to fight to his death, and saying “Caesar, we who are about to die solute thee.” Then the Kid stepped forward and the battle was on.

In next Sunday’s issue Kid Lavigne’s own story of his battles will appear.

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Kid Lavigne Quickly Won First Real Bout

Put His Opponent Away in the Second Round—Tells of His Remarkable 87-Round Battle With George Siddons

(By George “Kid” Lavigne)

Chapter 1

I was born in Bay City, Michigan, of French parentage, September 6, 1869. [All records including the Kid’s tombstone indicate it was December 6th] That was my first important engagement in life. At what age did I commence to fight, you would naturally ask. I will have to say I do not remember but, like other schoolboys, I had my little fights and invariably won.

I attended school at Millburg schoolhouse in Millburg, Michigan. One of my antagonists and the most aggressive, I remember very distinctly, was Jimmy Burns and how he used to fight! Before school hours, during recess, noon hour, and our way home after school, on the way to school, Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, at every conceivable place and for any cause we might have been seen battling. Jim would wait for me or I would wait for Jim. We always had to be separated, and I will say that if half the ring battles were fought with the same vim and determination of those

schoolboy fights they would always be worth the price of admission and worth travelling miles to see. I think that Jim missed his vocation. I have a strong impression that he would have been a champion.

WENT TO WORK IN MILL

At the age of 16 years I entered the mill of H. A. Batchelor as cooper's apprentice and there learned the trade. When I was 17 years of age a colored man by the name of C. C. Smith came to town. Smith was the colored champion of the world at that time. My brother Bill entered his class of boxing and coincident with his appearance in this story comes my start in things pugilistic. Smith was to give an exhibition with a fighter by the name of John Donaldson, and he inquired of my brother whether he could get a featherweight to box a young fellow by the name of Morris McNally. Bill suggested that I take the job. Smith was dubious about me, fearing that I was not of the right caliber, but Bill convinced him that I was sturdier than he imagined. Finally Smith gave his consent, and I was matched with McNally for four rounds, the prize to be a silver medal.

Visions of that medal were forever dangling before my eyes. Whether eating or sleeping, I thought of nothing else. Working, I would stop and jab at the atmosphere. Sleeping, I would see myself winner and loser alternately. I worried more over the outcome of that fight than over any of my later battles. This fight I had with McNally, to the surprise of everybody, I won in two rounds and walked home on air. McNally quit in the second round. Smith then took me up and instructed me and concluded that I was fit for more clever game, and matched me with a lightweight by the name of John White. I beat him easily in one round.

Smith was now thoroughly convinced that I had a future, and applied himself to the task of giving me a thorough training, and then matched me to fight Pickey Johnson, who had given Tommy Warren (once featherweight champion of the world) and also Ike Weir hard fights. We were matched for eight rounds. Johnson was constantly belittling my ability, and asserted that the second round would see my finish. Although he did not finish me in the second round, he knocked me flat with a jolt that caused me to see undiscovered stars. On recovering from the punch, I retaliated with a right-hand swing that took some of the confidence out of Mr. Johnson and gave me added confidence in myself. For eight rounds it was hammer and tongs. The end of the eighth round found both of us on our feet and fighting. I was fresh and willing to continue. The fight, however, was declared a draw. Everybody at ringside declared that there had been one given.

THAT SIDDONS BATTLE

My battle with George Siddons was a memorable one. Up to the time it was fought it was the longest of any ring encounter ever seen in this country. It occurred in the town of Tittibawassee, six miles from east Saginaw. I weighed 124 pounds, Siddons 126. Siddons was a ring veteran, having fought 46 battles. This was really my first professional appearance in the squared ring. More than 200 spectators were at the fight, many of them coming from Flint, Grand Rapids, Bay City, and Detroit.

We entered the ring about 11:30 and fought 87 rounds. [Newspapers of the time and current boxing records have this as 77 rounds] The papers stated the next morning that we were both apparently as fresh as when we started. In reality we were both mighty well exhausted. When many

of the spectators clamored for a draw, the fight was called off, bets were withdrawn and the gate money split evenly. I don't remember the amount but I think the total was in the neighborhood of \$250. The punishment I received from the fight was mostly about the head, which was very noticeable. It was my aim to wear Siddons down with body blows, but he was too clever for me. I could not reach the vital spot and was content with the draw. Previous to my match with Siddons, Harry Gilmore dropped into Saginaw and he engaged to look after my interests. The side bets made on me against Siddons amounted to \$1,000.

CONFIDENCE OF YOUTH

I was backed by a man named John Conley. Before stepping into the ring I was confident I would be returned the victor. Nothing could abate the feeling of confidence I had. It was the confidence of youth and strength. I remember hearing someone in the audience say, "I bet \$10 that Lavigne don't last 10 rounds." "Taken," said another fellow, and the bets were raised as to the number of rounds I would last. The fight was a hummer. How my blood tingled and sang with the joy of battle. I was in my element. "How do you feel, Kid?" said Siddons in one of our clinches. "O.K.," said I, "and Siddons, I am going to ask you that question later on." Which I did after the fight was over.

As the fight progressed my showing changed the opinions of those around the ring. "Will he win?" was now the question. "Hardly, but I hope so," would be the answer. At the end of 50 rounds Gilmore was solicitous as to my condition. At that point in the fight I could have had a draw if I had asked it. Gilmore kept saying "half a loaf is better than none," and I would say in reply, "a whole loaf is better than half; let her go!" "Go on," said my brother; "you are not hurt. George; go on." Echoes from the audience, "Go on, George, go on," and we did go on for 87 rounds.

It was late in the morning. Farmers' teams were arriving from the country. The men were going to work and we concluded that the best thing we could do was call the fight a draw. One of the incidents relating to this fight I well remember. On the way to the battle, in my hack were Harry Gilmore and Ed Fish, a candy maker. Fish was wearing a large fur cap. He told me to wear it on account of the cold. I tried it on and it appeared about three sizes too large. "Oh Ed," I said, "this is too large for me." "Put it on," said fish. "It will probably fit your head on the way back after the fight." Fish was right, for my head was swollen from the beating I had received. Here's to Ed's thoughtfulness!

After the Siddons fight I gave an exhibition in Lauren Bordwell's opera house, meeting all comers. Those were mild affairs and scarcely worth description.

In next Sunday's issue I will tell of my battles with Sotto, Jones, and O'Shaunessy

Kid Tells of First Experiences on Coast

**Defeats Joe Soto at Frisco in Thirty-One Rounds. Later He Had a Hard Time
Winning From Eddie Myer**

(By "Kid" Lavigne)

Chapter 2

After the fight with Siddons I went to work in the cooper shop in Millburg, Michigan, and worked three months when I was matched with Butch Kinney for four rounds in the Palace Theater at Manistee. In this fight I fought under strict police restrictions. The police at the last moment forbade a knockout and I had to be content with having the better of a rather tame affair. After this I went back home.

About this time I received a letter from Joe Courtmarsh, of San Francisco, telling me that the fighting field was open and to make a trip to the coast. I accepted this offer and getting my mother's consent, which was at all times a difficult matter, I started for Frisco. Arriving there I was matched with Joe Soto, whom I defeated in 31 rounds. Concerning this fight, I will relate an incident showing the ups and downs of a pugilist's life. Tommy Warren, the featherweight champion of the world, who generally counted money in bills of the thousand denomination, happened at that time to be broke and he wished to gain free admission to the fight, but the director refused to recognize his professional card. The latter wanted a ticket of the equivalent. My money, save what I had left with my mother at home, was gone, for I, too, had been having a good time, and I was sorry I could not help Tommy Warren in his embarrassing predicament, Such is a fighter's life. However, Warren did not see the fight.

AM MATCHED WITH JONES

A few weeks after my victory over Sotto I was matched with Charles Rochette. He was the amateur lightweight champion of the slope. I gained the decision over him very easily in ten rounds. I received about this time a letter from Jack Dempsey, that grand boxer, clean cut, whole souled, God fearing man that he was whose defeat at the hands of Bob Fitzsimmons broke his heart and also the hearts of many Americans. He asked me to get out and fight Harry Jones to a finish. I consented and posted a forfeit.

At this time, my brother John was under an operation in a Detroit hospital. He died three days before the fight with Jones. I was heart sick, for John was my favorite brother. I had no inclination to fight and told Jack Dempsey so. Remain true to his reputation for generosity, he told me that I could take down my forfeit. He even offered to pay my fare back east, but as there was no need of leaving then, Dempsey strongly advised me to stay.

Thinking the matter over, I concluded to remain and fight Jones. I beat him in eight rounds very easily receiving \$800 as my share of the purse. I then left for home and on arriving, resumed my labors as an industrial worker. My work was to pack salt in barrels, using a packer weighing 20 pounds. This exercise served to keep me in good physical trim.

COMEDY IN THIS BATTLE

About this period Tommy Ryan came to Saginaw. He had been matched to fight Jack Collins in Detroit at the same time I was matched to fight Mike O'Shunessy [the record shows this as Martin Shaughnessy], who had battled with Ryan for twenty-five rounds. Ryan assisted me in training and seconded me. This match with O'Shunessy was to have been for ten rounds but I defeated him in

nine. (Listen, here's how I beat him.) My brother Bill struck up an acquaintance with a newspaper man hailing from Columbus, Ohio whose name is Glen Grant. He told Bill of the number of fights he had seen and refereed. Now there had been some dispute as to the referee, so Bill figured that here was a man who was not interested one way or the other, and all parties finally agreed to the gentlemen as referee.

In one of the rounds I knocked O'Shunessy down twice and the first time the referee was rather slow in counting. This allowed O'Shunessy to get to his feet. The second time the referee acted as if he was bewildered or stage struck and stood for a full minute motionless. I asked him who was counting this man out and he came out of a dream and commenced counting but it was too late; the bell rang and O'Shunessy was saved for the round. In the eighth round O'Shunessy evaded me and evidently was going to stay the limit. Ryan said to me, "Now here Kid, this won't do. I know this fellow and I know how he fights. I want you to feint with your left hand and draw him on then shoot the right to the jaw and you'll get him." I followed his advice in the ninth round and true to his prediction dropped O'Shunessy. The referee, remembering his instructions, started to count very fast. O'Shunessy tried to get up at the count of five but the referee pressed his hands on his shoulders pushing him back to the floor, and said "I am the referee here," and he actually held him while he counted him out. O'Shunessy was really willing to continue but as he was counted out there was no question as to that point. This was really one of my funniest ring experiences.

BATTLE WITH EDDIE MYER

Four months later Ryan matched me with Eddie Myer of Streator, Illinois for \$2000 a side, seventy-five per cent to the winner and twenty-five per cent to the loser. I won this match in the twenty-second round. Let me quote from the press stories in case I should not do Myer justice. "The match between Eddie Myer of Streator, Illinois and George Lavigne, of Saginaw, Michigan, was decided at an old skating rink at Dana, Illinois, seventeen miles south of Streator. The fight was for a purse of \$2,500. About four hundred sports were present. Lavigne money was plenty, his friends offering odds, and betting even money, that he would win in twenty rounds. No time was lost in arranging preliminaries and the men got quickly together. Lavigne played heavy for the body, but had great difficulty in landing owing to the great dexterity of Myer and his clever dodging. The Myer people claimed first blood in the first round, but the claim was not allowed. In the third round Myer claimed that he had injured his right hand on Lavigne's head, and during the fight he was compelled to do all his leading with his left hand."

Now to me the newspaper statement seems rather strange as in the fifth round he unmercifully jolted me with that same right hand, and repeated it later on at intervals. "He displayed great cleverness," continued the newspaper, "landing on the Kid at will and nearly closing the eye of the man from the Sawdust City." (That's me). "Lavigne played for Myer's body and his blows when they landed, told heavy in the fourteenth round. Myer assumed the offensive and landed two blows to the Kid's one. Up to the twentieth round Lavigne pushed the fight hard in Myer's corner. The twenty-first round was the hottest of the fight, both men taking and receiving severe punishment. In the twenty-second and closing round, Myer got home on the eye and received a hard one in the neck in return. Lavigne landed twice to the stomach. Myer touched up his opponent's face and avoided a

swing. Several rapid blows were exchanged then while the men were in Myer's corner. Lavigne landed heavy on the cheek and a terrific blow to the heart and the Streator man went to the floor, down and out."

Now I will say this for Eddie Myer. He was a tough nut to crack, a good clean fighter and certainly dead game. If all my battles were as hard as this one, I hardly think I would have lasted as long as I did.

Next Sunday I will tell of the Griffin and Bowen Battles

Lavigne Gave Griffin Beating of His Life

Selfish Tactics of Braintree Lad Over Terms For Bout Caused Saginaw Kid to Punish Him Severely In Ring

(By George "Kid" Lavigne)

Chapter 3

My next match with Johnnie Griffin, the Braintree Lad, whom I beat in 15 rounds, was refereed by Tim Hurst. Now, another little experience that occasionally crops out in the life of a fighter occurred in my match with Griffin. The articles called for 128 pounds and for a \$1,500 purse. The winner was to receive \$1,250 and loser \$250. Ten days before the fight Griffin flatly refused to fight at 128 pounds, saying 124 pounds or nothing doing. Rather than lose this match I was inclined to agree, but Sam Fitzpatrick said, "No, the articles call for 128 pounds and he cannot get out of it." "But Sam," I said, "he will get out of it; he has refused to fight and forfeited his money. Let's get this fellow."

I insisted that we should fight at 124 pounds. When we agreed to 124 pounds, Griffin then declared that he must have \$1,250 win, lose, or draw. Finally the club was forced to agree to his ultimatum, as it had been put to heavy expense for advertising. Not wanting to get the worst in the financial struggle I said, "I will have to have \$750 win, lose, or draw; you can take it or leave it."

GRIFFIN WAS GAME

They took me on at my own figures, and then I proceeded to administer to Mr. Johnnie Griffin one of the most artistic trimmings that I ever handed any fighter. He told me afterward that he was deaf in one ear from the beating I handed him. To say something good about Griffin I must state that he proved wonderfully game. I had more real animosity toward him than any other fighter that I ever met on account of the howl about the terms.

The fight fans were wise that the police would interfere, and consequently the audience was small. The police did stop the fight in the fifteenth round. Griffin's showing was not of a high-class order, but he was game and stood up to the volley of blows that I sent him and responded to the call of time like a Roman. In the first round, at the tap of the bell, I started in. I was going to make him earn that \$1,250. I very much doubt if he ever took another such wallop as that for a purse as large as he received that night. I had him distressed in the first round and I thought I had finished him sure but I made no allowance for such a glutton for punishment. It was the same all the way up to

the tenth round. How he ever came back in each succeeding round was more than I could understand, but come back he would, and in the tenth round he actually freshened up and had the nerve to send in a couple of good ones. The audience was delighted with this and showed its approval, not so much on account of friendship for Griffin, but, like the average American, it loved to see the underdog bite back.

In the twelfth round he landed again on me hard, drawing blood but this I did not notice. In the thirteenth round he came back again and we had as merry a time as they have at an Irish fair. I had far the best of this round, but got some medicine myself. The police thought by this time the fight was too brutal and stopped it. I received the decision. After the bout I returned to Saginaw. My next battle was that awful, awful, tragic affair with Andy Bowen in New Orleans.

UNFORTUNATE AFFAIR WITH BOWEN

Poor old Andy Bowen. The terrible ending of our fight, which lasted to the eighteenth round, in New Orleans, will be forever present in my mind, and in every fight I participated in after that fatal bout a feeling of fear would always take possession of me. On entering the ring a nameless dread would engulf me and my mind would be on Andy Bowen's fate instead of the business that demanded my attention. His death was undoubtedly caused by his head striking the bare, hard wood floor with terrific force. If the ring had been padded by the club officials the ending would not have been so tragic.

My brother Bill made Andy's acquaintance before I saw him and they got to be warm friends. As we stepped to the center of the ring and shook hands I said, "Andy, my brother Bill sends his regards to you." "Good," said Andy, "and how is old Bill coming on?" "Fine," said I, "and how are you Andy?" "Oh, I am fit all right," he said. "And are you able to take care of yourself tonight George?" "Oh, I am able to sit up while my bed is being made," I replied; "and Andy laughed that chuckling laugh which he was famous for. "Well," said he, "here is a case where the best man wins." And how I have wished thousands of times that I had not won that fight!

Bowen was rather under the height of even a lightweight, but he had a magnificent physique and was an awful glutton for punishment. He was a game little man and a gentleman, who counted his friends by the thousands, and may he rest in peace! Previous to our fight Bowen was a favorite over me, and Tommy Ryan, who was billed to fight Jack Dempsey on the following night, was favored over Jack. The New Orleans sports had seen Ryan in his training quarters and could not see how he could possibly lose. The sports saw me work out and expressed the opinion that, although they were impressed with my work, they could not get it out of their heads that Andy Bowen would land the laurel wreath with some of his terrific punches.

BOWEN IS OUTCLASSED

About 2,500 or 3,000 spectators were present in the auditorium. The purse was \$3,000. I had the fight well in hand at the start, and, although I regret to say it here, considering the outcome of this fight, I had given poor Andy a thorough licking. He was as game a boy as ever stepped into a ring, but he was simply outclassed. I felt that I could put him out any time I wanted to, but I was taking my time and was well content to wait.

Everybody looked for a better fight from Bowen on account of his having trained with Jack Dempsey, and thought that in his improved condition he could win. How I wish now that he had won the fight. The knockout blow was sent in during the eighteenth round, when I shot my right to the side of his jaw and followed it up by a jolt to the chin, after which his head struck the floor. The dull thud was heard all over the auditorium. "Oh!" I heard many men exclaim; "Oh my God!"

One man near Andy's corner seemed to go stark crazy. That was one of the few happenings that I noticed. They told me that Bowen was unconscious for over half an hour. I was arrested later on, after Andy's death, with my seconds but was released and exonerated. This awful event will never leave my mind.

Jack Everhardt and Joe Wolcott Next Week.

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Everhardt and Griffo Made Lavigne Travel

Saginaw Kid Forced to Extend Himself To the Limit in His Battles With These Two Sturdy Exponents of Ring

(By George "Kid" Lavigne)

Chapter 4

My first match with Jack Everhardt occurred at Coney Island, and that rugged New Orleans Dutchman made me travel some. I remember that the police were very careful in weighing the gloves, but those matters having been settled we came to the center of the ring and received instructions. Previous to the fight however, Owen Zeigler, of Philadelphia challenged the winner. This fight was reported as the greatest that was ever pulled off at Coney Island. In the nineteenth round I thought I had Jack going and I was wild to finish him, but in the closing of the round this Dutchman came strong with a couple of stiff right-handers to the jaw and one to the mouth. The papers next day gave Jack the last round, but as I received the decision amid the wild applause of the audience I was satisfied.

Jack had the making of a champion, but he signally failed when he was pitted against McPartland in New Orleans. Public opinion was that McPartland was entitled to a shade, but I who have fought both of them, always found it hard to accept this version. In my later fight, too, Everhardt came a little but strong and made it so interesting for me that I left a few of my hard-earned dollars in the hospital.

SECOND FIGHT WITH GRIFFO

Again I had Young Griffo for an opponent. This fight was the one I had been long waiting for. I was confident that I could beat him, despite his superb ring generalship, but to my disappointment the best I got was a draw. Griffo proved more than clever that night. He told me afterwards that he would rather have beaten me than to have a whole barrel of suds, and that meant a great deal to Griffo. The first of the audience to arrive for the battle was John L. Sullivan, who was accompanied by

Parson Davies. It is unnecessary for me to say that an enthusiastic ovation was tendered the old ring gladiator. About 3,000 spectators were at the ringside, and that they received their money's worth was very evident after the fight.

Let me give a newspaper version of the first round, which is absolutely correct. "Round 1—Griffo was the first to land, left and right to the face. Lavigne came back with a left swing, but was stopped and caught another in the face from Griffo. A little sparring and Griffo landed on the face again. Lavigne smacked his lips and shook his head as though he did not like it. (I did not.) Lavigne landed a hard, beautiful swing on Griffo's ear, but was repaid by a left to the face and a right to the body. Lavigne rushed matters and landed a left on the wind. Griffo landed three hard jabs that caused the crowd to roar with laughter." I heard it and it made me crazy. The first round ended very slightly in Griffo's favor, and it was fast, very fast. The referee declared the bout a draw but many judges present declared that I should have received the decision.

AUSTRALIAN WAS WONDER

I have been asked who, in my estimation, was the best defensive fighter. I will answer here, as I have always answered. "Young Griffo undoubtedly." He had marvelous footwork and was the hardest man to put a glove on that I ever faced. Tantalizing, evasive and cunning, he kept his opponent in a heat of rage at all times and stages of the game. But my questioner would say, "He could not hurt anybody." No? Well no one ever succeeded in hurting him either. As a defensive fighter I never saw his equal. Much has been said about Griffo and his tactics in the ring, most of which is not true. In the ring he was always a gentleman, and, that was the only place he ever was a gentleman.

He could make our best lightweights look like novices. It was a fact that anybody engaged in a scientific bout with him was always outclassed, but the way I fought him in this fight was rough and ready, slam bang with utter disregard of the finer points of boxing. It is a fact that in a battle of this nature he could not show to advantage. Some boxing critics will ridicule this statement, but I fought him twice and I know. Here is what Griffo accomplished in one week: Horace Leeds, that scientific and rugged boxer, he beat in twelve rounds; Jimmy Dime, eight rounds; Bull McCarthy, six rounds; Jerome Quigley, six rounds; Jack Hardy, six rounds; and Joe Harmon, a strong 155 pound man he beat in eight rounds. Figure this out for yourself. Six clever American boxers! He made them all look as if they were chained to a stake. He was without a peer! [The record books have all of these fights happening over a three week period not one week]

I BEAT JOE WOLCOTT

Fistic sports in all sections of the country were aroused over the match between Joe Wolcott and myself. It was admitted in all corners that the winner of this battle could justly style himself the champion of the world at the lightweight limit. Never since the fight between Jack McAuliffe and Jem Carney of England was the sporting contingent so thoroughly stirred up. Many men were deterred from so doing through fear that the weight reduction exacted of the negro would weaken him.

O'Rourke, his manager, assured the people through the sporting columns of newspapers; however, that he would be sufficiently strong even at 133 pounds, and O'Rourke, being a "wise

member” in fistiana, there were many who followed his advice. Listen to these headlines that appeared in the morning newspapers: “Cut Off His Ear,” “Wolcott the Champion Clips Off Lavigne’s Hearing Trap But the Saginaw Wonder Puts Up a Winning Fight,” “Tired and Groggy and Covered with Gore, the Kid Rallied in the Twelfth Round and Fought Like a Fiend,” “It Was the Gamest and Most Desperate Battle Ever Fought in the East.”

The agreement between Wolcott and myself was this: The decision would be awarded to me if I should be on my feet at the end of the fifteenth round. We weighed in at 133 pounds at 6 o’clock. Wolcott was finally the favorite over me at 10 to 6. This was the fight of my career. I remember trying to force the battle in the first three rounds, for I was going to win and I knew it. There was not a doubt of it in my mind. It was a slashing mill from start to finish, and in the twelfth round the crowd seemed to go crazy over my work, which plainly showed where popular sympathy lay.

HAD JOE NEARLY OUT

In the thirteenth round Wolcott was very tired when the gong sounded. I knew that I was a winner and that prescience, if you might call it such, gave me added strength in the fourteenth round. I stopped most of his blows until he made a terrific uppercut at me. I ducked that and he fell full length on the floor from the force of his blow. When he arose I was at him tearing in from all angles and he was nearly out at the end of the fourteenth round. When the gong sounded in the fifteenth round Wolcott came up very weak and I swung a hard right to his neck, a straight left and he was staggering, another left on the neck and he went against the ropes. Then the bell rang and the fight was over.

Pandemonium reigned supreme; men shouted and cried and hugged each other. Young Griffo jumped into the ring and threw his arms around me. He was like a madman and so were a thousand others. I never saw a scene like it in all my ring experience. I remember after my first fight with Wolcott, the negro and I were walking side-by-side from the ring to our dressing rooms. On our way Wolcott was accosted by his old-time enemy, Mysterious Billy Smith, who was talking to Tommy Ryan. “Ha, ha! Nigger,” said Smith. “You got yours tonight, didn’t you?” “Yes,” said Wolcott in a flash, “and he can lick you, and you,” pointing successively to Smith and Ryan.

Previous to our fight O’Rourke had offered \$2,000 to \$1,000 that Wolcott would win. This bet was taken by Phil Dwyer, and after the fight was over and the bets paid, Phil made me a present of the \$1,000.

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Next Week—Jack McAuliffe and my second fight with Jack Everhardt

Wolcott Gave Lavigne His Worst Punishment

**Joe Helps the Saginaw Kid Whip Him by Lancing Latter’s Cauliflower Ear With the
Heal of His Boxing Glove**

(By George “Kid” Lavigne)

Chapter 5

It was the first fight with Joe Wolcott that I received my cauliflower ear. Before we had boxed one round I found out that he was a terrific puncher; the first time that he landed one of his swings I reeled back to the ropes dazed and groggy. In a couple of rounds the ear puffed up like a ripe tomato, but it felt worse than it looked. There was a continual buzzing in my head and I could hardly collect my thoughts. Up to the seventh round I was suffering intense pain and it was then that Wolcott gave me unexpected relief. In this round he landed another heavy blow on the ear, pulling the heel of the glove across and bursting the swelling. The blood flowed in a torrent but the pain subsided. Then I was fit to fight. When I retired to my corner the ear was plastered down by my seconds and the relief I secured helped me to win the fight.

MEETS JACK MCAULIFFE

About two months after, I took on Jack McAuliffe for six rounds in Madison Square Garden. I was in fairly good condition and I needed to be, for everyone knew of Mac's cleverness and ability. I needed all my condition, too, for although this was not looked upon as a knockout match, you could not go to sleep on your beat. Mac was not going to give me any the best of it either, and I was naturally anxious to be at my best with him and thereby make a still further good impression on the general sporting public. There was no decision rendered, however, and I have often wondered which of us would have been given. Perhaps this sounds a little egotistical as Mac was a past master in the boxing game. I still wonder.

About two weeks after the bout with McAuliffe I was asked to appear at a benefit which was tendered the former title-holder, and it was at this benefit that the world's lightweight title was turned over to me. John L. Sullivan officiated as the master of ceremonies, and in his inimitable Irish manner eulogized McAuliffe, which set me to thinking of what I might expect in my new role—that of champion. John, however, had high hopes of me and gave me many words of encouragement and advice. This was the most impressive moment of my life; I was a champion in the midst of champions and I resolved that through no act of mine should a blot be placed on my record.

Subsequent events, in which I lost to Billy Smith and Jimmy Britt, had not origin in my mind, the deals having been put through by one who should have stood by me even though all others failed. How true is that old saying, "The hand is often bitten by the one it feeds." Deliver me from my friends.

SECOND FIGHT WITH EVERHARDT

"George Lavigne, the Saginaw Kid, was too much for Jack Everhardt, of New Orleans. Both boxers stood terrific punishment, but Everhardt was a perfect glutton for it. The pace was terrific. The bell saved Everhardt several times. The betting on the mill was 2 to 1 in Lavigne's favor." This fight with Everhardt is one I can never forget, for as the papers stated next morning, the pace was terrific. It certainly was. Jack as a punisher had few superiors and I believe that I was lucky to win. The fight was held under the auspices of the Bohemian Athletic Club and the club house was filled to

overflowing. A few bets were offered at even money that I would knock Jack out in ten rounds, but they evidently did not know that German.

We were to fight twenty-five rounds for a purse of \$3,500. John Kelly was the referee and the match was for the lightweight championship of the world. Before the battle one of my friends wagered \$5,000 to \$2,500 on me. We ripped it up rather lively in the first round, Jack giving me as good as I received. In the fourth round I rushed Jack and caught him twice on the jaw, left and right, and in the mix-up that followed I smashed Jack again, staggering him with rights and lefts on each ear; another smash with my right and Jack was groggy. The bell then saved him. The fifth round was a hot one, with equal exchange. I uppercut him heavily as the gong sounded.

Rounds from nine to eleven were hot ones. We slugged each other unmercifully all over the ring. Each of us showed that he was a good punishment absorber, both raining all kinds of jabs and smashes. So honors were divided. In round fifteen Jack slugged me thoroughly and with sincere intention knocking me to the ropes and splitting my lips, uppercutting me with considerable force and got in repeatedly with his left on my face. In round sixteen, Jack put a vicious blow to my jaw and in return I whipped in four good hot ones to his face. Jack clinched constantly in this round.

HAS RIVAL GROGGY

In the eighteenth round we were mixing it again, and after at least ten more good smashes I had Jack groggy, but still he came back. Both of us were rather tired this round for the pace had been very fast. In the twenty-first round Jack was reeling again and was prevented from falling by my glove, which was against his head. In the twenty-third round I shot three lefts to the face and my right to his wind. Jack clinched to keep from falling. He was weak but game. Three more body blows and he clinched again. I was holding him up as the gong rang. In the twenty-fourth and last round with a right swing I had him reeling. With another I straightened him up, a third swing staggered him again and he was helpless. I was weak as a kitten when the referee stepped between us, stopping the fight and gave me the decision. The papers stated that Jack took enough punishment to have put out half a dozen men and that his frequent recoveries during the fight were remarkable. I, myself, went into a hospital for a couple of weeks after this battle and it was months before I again felt fit.

Next Week—Battle with Dick Burge of England

**Part Two (Chapters 6- 10) will appear in the
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