



Ringside sketch of the international four round bout between Charley Mitchell and Jake Kilrain in the New England Institute Building, Boston, March 26, 1884. It was the first fight ever staged in the country under the Revised "Police Gazette" International Rules in which four ounce gloves were used. The fight ended in a draw.

HEAVYWEIGHT contests, when international fistic celebrities are involved, have always aroused world interest. In the days when John L. Sullivan ruled the roost, there were far more top contenders than we find to-day. Many were only middleweights yet mingled with the cream of the heavies. The weight problem was never considered in that era. Often we find in the historic records of the past, 160 pound pugilists fighting in bouts to a finish with opponents scaling close to 200 pounds or more.

Such was the case every time the claimant to the British heavyweight crown, Charley Mitchell entered a ring contest. A bona-fide middleweight possessing extreme cleverness, it will be recalled that in 1887 he fought Sullivan a draw of 39 rounds at Chantilly, France, on the estate of Baron Rothchild, for the world heavyweight championship. Prior to that, however, he had faced a number of tough hombres, including a bout in Madison Square Garden with the Boston Strong Boy that was halted by the police in the third round. In that affair he dropped the Boston Strong Boy in the opening round.

After Mitchell had won the British Empire middleweight title in 1882, Billy Madden, then touring England, staged a tournament which Mitchell won, following which he whipped Tug Wilson three times and Alf Greenfield

and then accepted Madden's invitation to go to New York. He arrived on March 23, 1883 and a fortnight later whipped Mike Cleary in three rounds, lost to Sullivan in three, fought Danny Hayes a four rounder, drew with William Sheriff in seven and won from Joe Denning in four.

Madden by now was satisfied that Mitchell was the equal of America's best and decided that if he would either whip or draw with Jake Kilrain, then one of the outstanding American battlers, the man whom Richard K. Fox, owner of the Police Gazette was eager to pit against Sullivan, Madden could sell the Britisher to the public as a suitable opponent for the Great John L. in a championship match to a finish.

The Kilrain affair was arranged for Boston, for March 26, 1884 and on the day of the fight, 6000 spectators paid \$1.00 and \$2.00 entrance fee to the New England Institute to see the international fight. Though it was the era of skin-tight gloves and many bare-knuckle contests were also fought, Mitchell, like Sullivan, preferred to use gloves. His insistence and that of the Boston police, prevailed in their use. So keen was the interest, that special trips were arranged for New York, Pennsylvania and New Jersey sportsmen to attend and the fight drew a packed house.

What made the fight one of international importance was the fact that it

was the first exhibition of its kind ever held in Boston—four rounds under the "Police Gazette Revised rules." Though a drenching rain-storm made things uncomfortable for the fight fans, the arena was crowded. When the sports arrived, each spectator was given a copy of the new rules so that the fight could be followed more closely. Kilrain scaled 176 to 160 for Mitchell.

The fight was a fast one with excellent defensive work on the part of Mitchell and good, solid hits by his opponent. The Englishman got out of range of Kilrain's best punches by clever ducking and sidestepping. He tried to tire Jake by stepping about rapidly but Kilrain forced the issue, was the aggressor and in the third and fourth round landed many heavy blows to nose and body. Mitchell's judgment of distance was bad in the final round and the punches that did land, were lacking in force.

The fourth was their best round and the huge gathering speeded up their work with wild cheers for each. Just before the end of hostilities, Kilrain cornered Mitchell and pounded his body as he let go vicious lefts and rights.

The contest, the papers reported, was one of the best witnessed in the City of Culture and Kilrain was rated as an excellent opponent for Sullivan. It was the start of the drive that eventually brought Jake and John L. together in their famous 75 round bout.