

The Venetian Giant and the Big Bad Irishman

By Robert Carson

If you believed every sports story concerning fighters of the past, one would be led to think that every boxer that laced on the gloves long ago, was invincible. Well, if you're any sort of historian on prize fighting, you know that this is far from the truth. Take the case of Primo Carnera and Irish Pat Redmond.

Carnera had been drawing huge crowds since his auspicious debut in

New York City against lanky Big Boy Peterson on January 24th, 1930. The giant ex-strongman from Sequals, Italy, had proceeded to bowl over carefully selected opponents with apparent ease. Such notable worthies as Elziar Rioux, Cowboy Bill Owens, Farmer Lodge, ex-football player

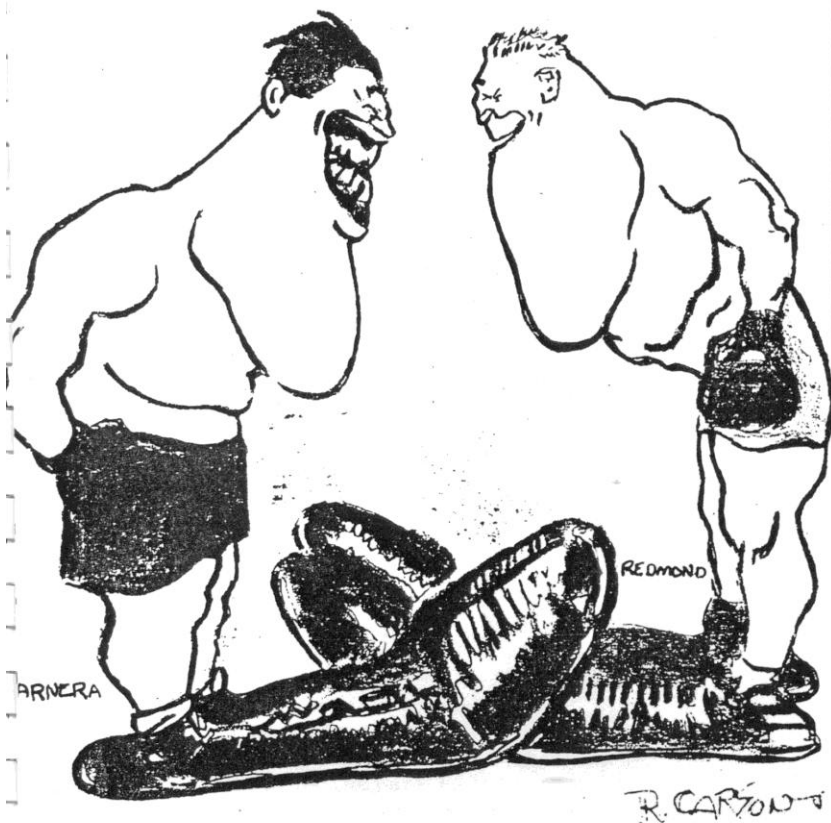
George Trafton, Jack Gross, and a host of others, succumbed under the huge fists of Carnera, all with apparent ease.

A fight was proposed to be held in Brooklyn's Ebbets Field if the 'opponent' was right. Promoter James (Jimmy) Johnson made a frantic search for someone suitable, and finally found an emergency fighter in Irish Pat Redmond. The sportswriters quickly picked up on this and titled the up-coming match as "The Battle of Buncombe."

You couldn't blame poor ole Pat for the lambast by the press, after all, all he wanted was good payday. The native born Australian, under the tutelage of the legendary Tom O'Rourke, hadn't exactly set the boxing world afire with his performances. Fighting mostly on a small time scale, Redmond had appeared in fight clubs such as the Ridgewood Grove Sporting Club, being beaten by the German Ernest Guhring, and ancient veteran, Jack Renault.

After a postponement, the fight finally came off on June 15th, 1931. Despite the uncertain spring weather, over 20,000 fans stormed the turnstiles putting receipts at well over \$40,000. Not much by present day standards, but back then a sizeable sum.

As the Celtic 'man-eater' sat in his corner waiting for Carnera, he appeared as "246 pounds of harmlessness." Wrapped in a light brown, striped with big and heavier markings of the same color, Pat sat there gazing out at the sizable audience. As columnist Ed Huges described, "He is an unusual, bizarre specimen, even for a giant. A huge, unshapely head, an immense breadth of shoulders, his chest matted deep with hair. His legs are tremendous, and on one of them are bulging veins almost the size of an ordinary rubber tube. Despite his terrifying proportions, the "windows of the soul" give him away. His extraordinary drop of chin is more a defor-



mity than an impression of will power, but, as I say, the eyes catalogue him unmistakably. They are small and kindly. These are not a killer's eyes. There is a strong touch of apology, and a dull sort of merriment in them." A rather graphic description and one not to instill confidence in the small number of Pat Redmond fans.

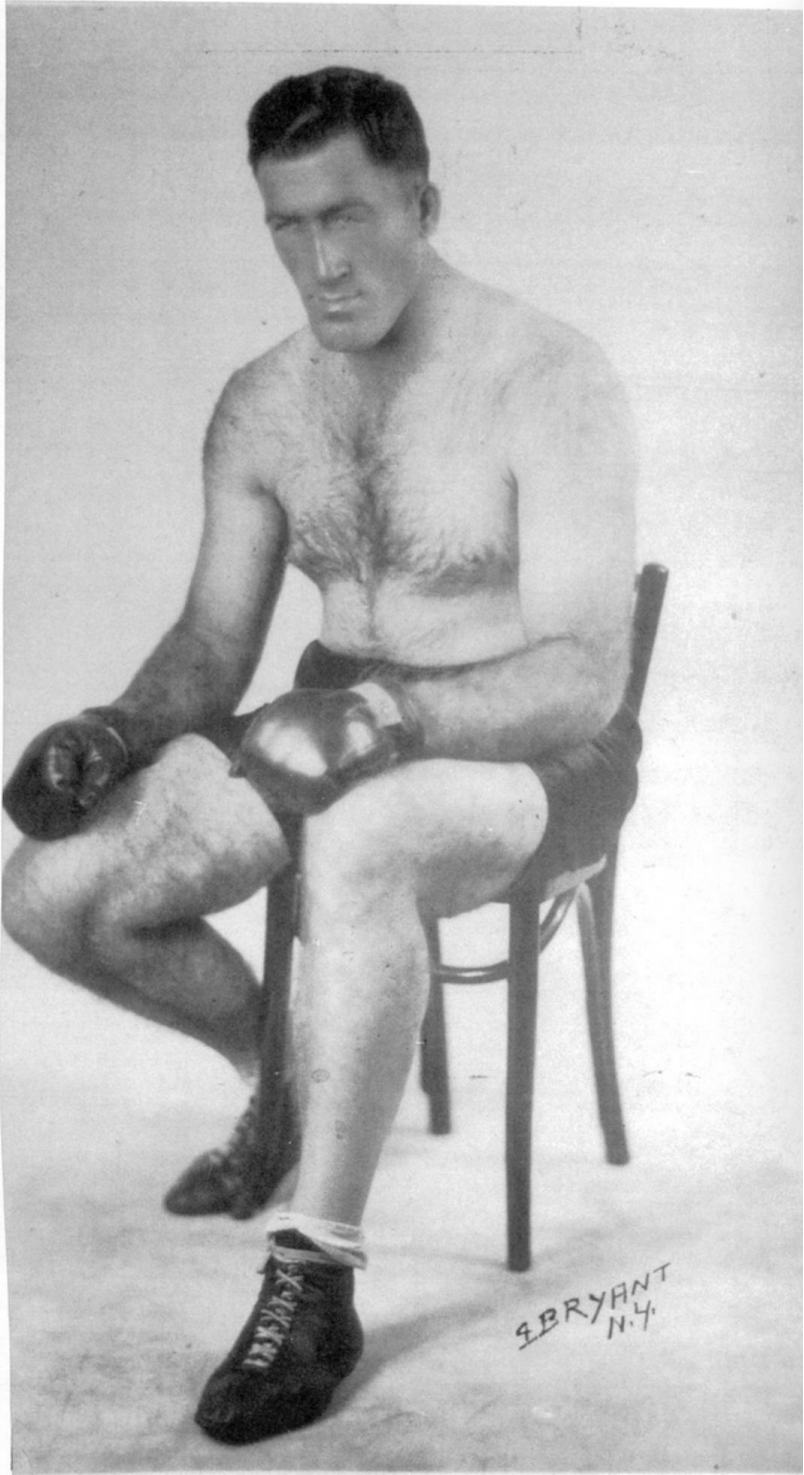
Carnera entered the ring with a thunderous ovation from the large number of Latins in attendance. Wearing a purple robe, with gold trimmings and matching trunks, a white towel around the thick neck, Carnera appeared good natured and smiling as he bowed and waved to the shouting gathering.

At the sound of the gong, Pat walked out hesitantly and cautious. Carnera not wanting any sparring began mauling the Irishman furiously with combinations to the head. Pat, startled by the sudden attack, started backpeddling with Carnera throwing wild lefts and rights, most of which were caught by Pat's expansive chin. A right and left finally put Pat on his back, and with a kind of somersault, ending with Pat on his knees. Taking an eight count and wearing a foolish grin on his face, Pat prepares to face the onslaught again. Now Pat tries to be on the offense and clouts Primo twice with overhand rights, but Carnera now hammers away at the Irishman. Pat attempts to fend off the assault as he "pushes his gloves out in horrible, grotesque motions, more like a young lady learning to bat a tennis ball, his face puckered up in peculiar creases of dismay." After a period of "lunging and cuffing" Pat again goes to the deck, landing on his side. Rolling over on his back, Pat Redmond is counted out. Primo, with the help of four other men, drag the "Celtic man-eater" to his corner, his nose bleeding slightly.

The press corps had a field day writing scathing articles about the purported battle, saying Redmond wasn't a fit opponent, and that it was an obvious 'tank job.'

Promoter Jimmy Johnson only smiled and shook his head, stating "Why, seven of the experts actually came right out and said they thought Redmond would WIN! What do you think of that?" With that, he was off to deposit his share of the 'take.'

One is reminded of what Liberace once said in reply to all the heavy kidding he was getting from comedians. "Do these remarks by comedians really bother me? Well, sure it hurts and hurts deep. In fact, I cry all the way to the bank."



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