

MORGAN CLAIMS ANOTHER VICTIM

Some time, I don't know when, "Dumb" Dan Morgan claimed that Battling Levinsky, for whom he had been manager, fought three men on January 1, 1915 (Gunboat Smith, Bartley Madden, and Soldier Kearns). However, all of the many editions of the T.S. ANDREWS' WORLD SPORTING ANNUAL & RECORD BOOK or the POLICE GAZETTE SPORTING ANNUAL showed Levinsky fighting only Smith on January 1. In fact, so far as I can tell, no record book ever showed Levinsky as having three fights on January 1, 1915 until the 1956 RING RECORD BOOK did so.

In recent years, some of us have gone back and looked at the newspapers. Evidence of Levinsky fighting Smith on the date in question is easily found. But no one has located any indication that he also fought Madden and Kearns on that date. Morgan was well known as a master of publicity in days when outlandish claims were sometimes substituted for the truth. He lived a long life. I don't know when the garrulous old fellow concocted this story, but I wouldn't be surprised if he repeated it so often that he came to believe it himself.

Now, over 80 years later, it appears that Mike Paul has joined the ranks of the gullible. In issue #51 of the IBRO NEWSLETTER he listed a "correction," adding the Kearns and Madden fights back into Levinsky's record, giving Ken Blady as the source. Blady, in his short chapter on Levinsky in THE JEWISH BOXERS' HALL OF FAME (1988), repeated this old story, but there is no indication that he did any checking of newspapers or found the "missing" fights. He seems to have simply repeated Morgan's old tale, which was mentioned in articles published in THE RING and other boxing magazines down through the years.

Even though no evidence has been found to substantiate old Danny's story, it seems that Nat Fleischer was taken in by it many years later. There is no evidence that Fleischer ever went back to primary sources (newspapers) and checked record book entries against them. (Indeed, he occasionally published records of fictitious fighters!) If we are to make the records of the champions and old-time fighters accurate, we cannot accept claims such as the one Morgan made unless the newspaper reports support them.

So, from Nat Fleischer to Ken Blady to Mike Paul. When will the chain end? However, I hope that Mike won't let this episode discourage him from boxing research. It isn't always easy to separate the truth from fiction. If he can come up with evidence that Levinsky actually did fight Kearns and Madden on January 1, 1915, he can have the last laugh, but I doubt that he (or anyone else) can.

-Lockett Davis