

~History Worth Repeating~

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As revisited by Bob Winkler

**The Great Prize Fight
Between Tom Hyer and Yankee Sullivan**

This great prize fight took place on Wednesday the 7th instant, at Roach's Point, on the Chesapeake; Kent County, Maryland.

It appears that after fifteen rounds, which lasted about sixteen minutes, Yankee Sullivan was unable to come to time, and that the victory was awarded to Hyer.

The great excitement throughout the community, among all classes, in regard to this fight, induces us to give a brief sketch of its origin, the parties concerned, the mode of training, the incidents of the fight, &c.

Yankee Sullivan is an Irishman, known in New York as the keeper of a small porter house in Chatham Street. He has been long famous as a pugilist, and was second to Lilly in the famous prize fight between Lilly and McCoy, which terminated in the death of the latter. In England he fought with the celebrated Champion of the Ring, as it is called, Hammer Lane, and obtained the victory, since which time his name has been "up" as the champion prize fighter of all Christendom. Hyer is a stouter and stronger man than his antagonist, but is said not to possess his science and skill. He is an American - a native of New York.

Sullivan's weight is stated at 150 pounds - his height 5' 9" - age, 35 years. Hyer's weight is 180 pounds - height, 6' 2" - age, 29 years. So it will be seen that Hyer had the decided advantage over Sullivan in strength and length of arm, if not in science.

The fight originated in the following manner: It seems that Hyer got it into his head that Sullivan was not quite so great a man as his friends believed him to be, and felt confident that he, himself, deserved the title of champion, more than Sullivan. A little jealousy between the two was thus created, and in this state of feeling they accidentally met one day at a porter house in Broadway. Taunts and jeers between the two naturally arose, till Hyer, exasperated and burning to try his powers, threw off his coat and dared Sullivan, then and there, to the battle.

Sullivan instantly 'peeled,' and they had a regular 'set to.' Hyer caught Sullivan by the head, held him by the neck firmly under his arm, and there kept him, thrashing him at his leisure. After this, several belligerent cards were published by the parties; a bitter warfare of words was carried on in the public

papers, until the present fight, for a stake of ten thousand dollars was arranged between them by their several friends.

- ◇ The *New York Herald*, speaking of the morale of the fight, has the following:

Yet there are some circumstances connected with this prize fight, as well as with the preparations for it by the prize fighters, from which we, like the honey bee, which extracts sweet juices from the thistle of the desert, can draw something like a moral or a lesson. The self-denial, the temperance, the daily exercise, the beautiful regimen, which both the pugilists underwent for months before the encounter between them took place, present the elements of a system of life, which is equal to any system of morality or human conduct that can be picked out of the historical romances from the time of Socrates to the training of Hyer and Sullivan. The following was the mode of training adopted by the respective pugilists:

“Since December last, Sullivan and Hyer have been undergoing severe training - the former at Shaw’s near the Union Race course, Long Island, and the latter at Dodge’s near M’Comb’s Dam - Sullivan has been attended by Country McCleester and Tom O’Donnell; and Hyer by George Thompson and Joe Winrow, as trainers.

Sullivan’s mode of life was to rise at daybreak and run five or six miles on the race course, and return to his room, exercise with dumb bells, striking out six or seven hundred times. After a short rest, he exercised upon a heavy bag, hanging by a single cord from the ceiling, and stuffed to the weight of his antagonist. He then washed thoroughly his arms, chest, neck and head with cold water and adjourned to breakfast. His breakfast was a large beef steak, cooked rare and seasoned only with old English ale. Instead of steak, he occasionally took broiled chicken. After an hour’s repose, he walked or ran eight or ten miles, and, returning in a slight perspiration, was thoroughly soused with cold water, several times, and was then rubbed briskly with coarse towels. He then put on fresh flannel, (his daily practice,) and dined on rare steak, soused in old English ale. Another hour of repose, and the afternoon was devoted to sparring, dumb bell exercise, and pounding the bag; a wash in cold water, and a walk of four or five miles, when he retired about 9 P.M.

Hyer’s plan of training has been nearly the same, with this difference, that he has exercised considerably in climbing the hills near M’Comb’s Dam, and in rowing; and occasionally dining on mutton. Salt, pepper, tobacco, ardent spirits and stimulants have been strictly forbidden. The only fluids permitted to be used, have been slight thimbles full of ale or water. The most chaste and temperate course of life has been adopted by both. Hyer has eaten three meals a day - at 8, 12 and 4 - while Sullivan has eaten only two meals at 8 and 4. During the two weeks immediately preceding the fight, mutton was substituted for beef.”

- ◇ We copy from the *Herald* the preliminary circumstances and the details of the fight.

For the three days preceding the fight, Philadelphia and Baltimore, the latter city more particularly, have been thronged by visitors of a description, not peculiar to those cities, which, although celebrated in some particulars, cannot be termed patrons of the prize ring, to judge from their exertions to prevent this much talked of event taking place. As early as Monday night, the hotels of Baltimore were crowded, from Barnum's in Monument square, down to Spangler's, in the Marsh Market. Groups of "shoulder hitters" and their admirers might be seen at all points, engaged in most animated discussions on the merits of the respective combatants - some betting - some wrangling - and others, who had no other means, backing their opinions by battling each others heads. Arrangements had been made, and boats had been chartered, by the friends of the parties to convey the principals, and all who wished to witness the affair to the place designated for the occasion; but on Tuesday it was ascertained that the authorities were determined to prevent the fight taking place within the limits of the State of Maryland, and had laid injunctions on the boats chartered, and held their captains to bail. As soon as it was ascertained that the boats could not go, a rush was made to the livery stables for conveyances by land, and large numbers were seen leaving Baltimore, in every kind of vehicle, all endeavoring to reach the spot selected for the fight as speedily as possible. The authorities determined not to be thwarted in their endeavors to suppress the fight, immediately dispatched a police force to make all possible arrests of those supposed to be engaged in the affair, particularly the principals, Sullivan and Hyer, and their seconds, who they knew had taken up their quarters in the vicinity of Pool's Island, in the Chesapeake Bay, about twenty-five miles from Baltimore, and within the jurisdiction of the State of Maryland. The parties who chartered the steamers, finding their plans frustrated, determined, in defiance of law, and in order to reach the place at all hazards, or in any manner, succeeded, by heavy offers and by great solicitation, in hiring two oyster boats to convey the many hundreds who wished to witness the fight to Pool's Island. Upon this scheme being ascertained by the authorities, they chartered the steamboat Boston, in which they placed two companies of infantry and a posse of police officers, with instructions to follow the vessels and prevent the meeting taking place; and, if necessary, to use force in preserving the peace. The first boat to leave was the one chartered by the Sullivan party, on board of which about one hundred persons, of the great number who were anxious to go, took their departure - the rest not daring to trust their lives in so frail a bark. The Hyer boat followed soon after, with about the same number on board, and in her wake followed the steamboat with the military. This took place between nine and ten o'clock on Tuesday evening. About two o'clock in the morning the boat on which were the Sullivan party, arrived off Pool's Island, and came to anchor. About an hour afterwards, the Hyer boat made it's appearance, and came to anchor also. On the arrival of the boats, several went on shore and made up fires on the beach, awaiting the approaching daylight, and to apprise the combatants of

impending danger. The fires were scarcely kindled, when a posse of police officers, headed by Gifford, high constable of Baltimore, appeared in their midst. They had come by land from Baltimore, and then crossed over to the island in boats. A scene of much confusion ensued, and great scrambling in every direction, some hiding in the cedar bushes, while others perched themselves on the branches of trees. The officers were particularly desirous of arresting the principals, Sullivan and Hyer, they having warrants for both individuals. They first went to the place where Hyer lodged, but he being apprised in time, escaped through a window, leaving Thompson, his second, to be arrested in his stead, whom the officers mistook for Hyer, he being a man about Hyer's own size. Hyer managed to reach the shore, and was taken to the vessel which contained his friends. Sullivan was next favored with a visit, but he also escaped by a *rue de guerre*. On the alarm being given him, he arose hastily, dressed himself, and throwing a cloak over O'Donnell, his second, to conceal his feature, passed him into the hands of the officers as the veritable Yankee himself, and so effected his own escape to the vessel of his friends. By this time, the steamboat Boston, with the military, had arrived, as also a steam propeller from Philadelphia, loaded with persons anxious to see the fight. A party of the military were dispatched on shore, to destroy what preparations had been made, and take charge of those who had been arrested by the police; which they accordingly did. They also captured the ring, which had been put up the previous day. The police officers, disappointed in arresting Sullivan and Hyer, whom they supposed had taken refuge on board the propeller, resolved to search her, and arrest them if possible. The parties on board the propeller, believing the fight at an end for the present, started down the bay, followed by the Boston, with the military, in pursuit; and while she was chasing the propeller, the schooners with the belligerent parties started to another direction in search of a suitable place for the fight - knowing that there would be no chance on Pool's Island. They went up the Chesapeake Bay some fifteen miles further, where they soon found a place suitable for the business at hand.

The Fight

Sullivan tossed his cap first into the ring, and followed it immediately after. He was soon after followed by Hyer, who was borne to the ring on the back of Dutch Charley. The choice of position was then won by Sullivan, who was the favorite at 100 to 80 - no takers.

- First Round - At twenty minutes past four, the question was asked by [Joe] Winrow, "Are you ready" and being answered by Sullivan in the affirmative, the men walked up, shook hands, returned to their corners, and waited the call of time. When the word was given, they moved quickly up to the scratch, and after a few feints from Sullivan, the hitting was commenced by Sullivan striking with his left hand at the body of Hyer, which, however, did not discomfort Hyer in the least. Hyer appeared on the defensive, ready to

encounter or return, but not willing to lead. In a moment the blows flew sharply on both sides, but not effective, as they were nearly all stopped, evincing much science. The combatants then closed for the fall, large sums having been staked on that event. A tremendous struggle ensued, and Sullivan was thrown heavily, Hyer on him. The back of Sullivan's head was injured by the fall. The result of this round put the friends of Hyer in ecstasies, and gave fearful forebodings to the Sullivan party, as they had placed great reliance on their favorite's wrestling abilities.

- Second Round - Sullivan looked, as he came up, as if astonished at Hyer's herculean powers. Sullivan's efforts to win the throw in the previous round, had, no doubt, strained him considerably; but nothing daunted, he rushed at his opponent and made several attempts to reach his face with both left and right: but in nearly every instance he failed. He was more successful, however, with his body blows, and got in two or three. In return for these favors, Hyer gave him two taps on the top of the head, and a severe blow with the left hand, between his eyes, which not only made Sullivan see stars, but cut a deep gash, from which the blood flowed copiously down his face, filling his eyes and impairing his sight. The round terminated with another clinch and struggle, and Sullivan was thrown, Hyer falling heavily on him. A shout again burst from the friends of Hyer.
- Third Round - As soon as time was called, both men seemed eager to get to the scratch, but when within hitting distance assumed an air of cautiousness. Several feints were made by Sullivan to induce Hyer to lead, but all to no purpose. Sullivan then let fly his right hand at Hyer, followed quickly by his left at the neck, which, reaching the intended place, brought Hyer to the earth as if he had been shot. Sullivan laughing at him as he was on the ground. This event, in turn, brought shouts from Sullivan's friends, and revived their spirits, which had drooped considerably at the result of the first two rounds.
- Fourth Round - This round was quickly fought. They went to work in earnest, Hyer seeming anxious to return the compliment of the previous round. He let go his left and right in rapid succession at the head and face of Sullivan, a few of which took effect, during which time Sullivan was taking liberties with his body - Sullivan was forced down. This time Hyer did not fall with Sullivan, but came very near stepping on him.
- Fifth Round - The men were quickly at the scratch again, and went to work in right good earnest. Sullivan tried to make his left fell on the head of Hyer, but failed. He then tried the body, and in return received a heavy left-hander over the left eye, which staggered him, and he fell on his knees, but in an instant was on his feet again and rushed at Hyer, showing evidently that he did not intend taking advantage of the drop game. The round soon ended, however, by Hyer giving him a bear-like hug, and crushing him to the earth.

- Sixth Round - Fighting on both sides the order of the day - no flinching by either - give and take - Sullivan taking the largest share. Hyer rallied Sullivan to the ropes, and after holding him some seconds with his back on them, threw Sullivan and fell on him with his arm across his neck. The seconds of Hyer seeing his advantageous position, suffered him to remain on Sullivan longer than the rules governing the ring allow; in consequence of which a cry of foul was raised, and considerable feeling was exhibited by the backers of both men. The referee, however, decided that it was fair and the fight should go on. This gentlemen appeared here at fault as to the length of time allowed, to the seconds of the man on top to have him removed, and of course was in rather an awkward predicament.
- Seventh Round - This was a short but terrific round. Sullivan struggled on at his up-hill work, with great perseverance. It was evident, not only to himself but to all his friends, that his chances of winning the fight were gone. He had began to exhibit weakness, from the severity of the fall he had received, and was bleeding freely from two gashes, which were pouring streams of blood into his eyes and down his face. The decision of the referee, in the last round, also tended to make him desperate, and he rushed at Hyer, letting fly his left and right. His blows had little effect while Hyer made fearful impressions on his face and head. In this round Hyer struck Sullivan a blow on the neck, that staggered him several feet, and which was the most dangerous one that he received during the fight; in fact, he did not, to the end, recover from its affects. This round closed like a majority of the preceding ones, by Hyer throwing Sullivan, and falling on him in the way most likely to do him injury.
- Eighth Round - As Hyer came up to the scratch this time, we noticed that one of his eyes was black and much swollen, caused by a rally in one of the previous rounds. This round was very short - only a hit from Hyer on Sullivan's head - a clinch - a struggle - and Sullivan thrown heavily on the ground, Hyer on him, laying his great weight across Sullivan's breast and body, as if endeavoring to crush every bone in his frame. More requests were now made by the Sullivan party to have Hyer taken up quicker when he was on their man, as that would give them more time to attend to him.
- Ninth Round - Sullivan came to the scratch this time, a horrid picture; his seconds had not attended to the cleaning of the blood from his face and neck, having been too busily engaged in discussing the points of foul and fair of the last round, to attend to the more immediate wants of their charge. The blood was streaming from several wounds down his face, neck and breast. He walked up to meet his powerful opponent, with a bad prospect before him, with as much alacrity and courage as if the battle throughout had been in his favor. Hyer now began to see his great advantage, and commenced waging an aggressive warfare. He made several desperate blows with his right hand

at the face of Sullivan, evidently determined to finish him as soon as possible. Sullivan parried and dodged the first four or five blows, smiling all the time, and endeavoring to put in a hit for every miss of his adversary. Hyer at length caught Sullivan a severe rap on the side of the head, and another one over the left eye, both with his right hand, his left being used very little except for parrying. He next seized Sullivan and forced him to the ropes, where, after a desperate struggle, each trying to injure the other as much as possible, Sullivan was hurled to the ground with Hyer on him, who lay with his body across Sullivan's face. The seconds of Hyer were again in no particular haste to remove their man, and another appeal was made to the umpires, and by them to the referee, who again decided fair, and at a suitable time Hyer was removed and the men taken to their corners, which they had scarcely reached, when time was again called.

- Tenth Round - Sullivan began to look fatigued; his hands were not held as high as previously in defense, and he gasped occasionally for breath, while Hyer looked fierce, formidable and full of fight. The round was commenced by an attack from Sullivan, and ended by a right-handed blow from Hyer, with the usual ground and lofty tumbling.
- The Eleventh, Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth rounds were counterparts of each other. Sullivan had now to do all his work with his right hand, his left having become completely useless from wrenches given it by Hyer in the course of the fight - while Hyer could use both; and he kept them moving until a clinch took place, when he would hurl Sullivan down and lay on him until his seconds removed him, no matter how long they might be about it; and cries of "foul," "fair," were heard at the termination of each round.
- Fifteenth Round - Sullivan was rather slow in getting up at the call of time, and had barely reached the score when he was met by Hyer, who, with tremendous force, let fly both hands in rapid succession, both taking effect on Sullivan's face. He then rushed in, seized Sullivan, forced him to the ropes, and after a struggle threw him heavily and fell on him, when he again injured him so much that, by the time Hyer was taken away, Sullivan was nearly suffocated; and, on being lifted to his feet, was so weak that he fell back against the ropes. His brother and another person then took him from the ring, claiming foul, and this, put an end to the fight. The referee, however, decided that Hyer had won the fight.

The fight lasted about sixteen minutes, and was one of the fiercest and most desperate encounters ever witnessed. As soon as Sullivan left the ring, Hyer walked over to one of Sullivan's seconds and struck him a blow on the head; but a revolver being presented to his head, he desisted from further aggression.

The parties, as soon as possible, returned to their respective vessels, got on board, and made for the safest place to avoid arrest, all hands being apprehensive of the event.

Arrest of Hyer

On Friday Hyer was arrested in Philadelphia, and retained until the authorities of Maryland should indicate the course they intended to pursue in the matter. *The Philadelphia Bulletin* says: Hyer was conducted thro' the State House yard to a hack in waiting, when the crowd rushed into the street, and made the welkin ring with repeated huzzas for Hyer. The excitement of the mob was intense, but no attempt to rescue was made, as Hyer was cool as a man could be, and would not have permitted it. He was then driven to prison.

Sullivan arrived in Philadelphia the same day, and remained overnight. The police were after him, but he succeeded in eluding their search. Those who saw him say that he is not in any way seriously hurt.

Immense amounts were bet on this fight. Over \$100,000 was staked by prominent individuals in New York.

Mr. Van Ostrand, referee in this affair publishes a card giving his decision that the result was in favor of Hyer - and Mr. Frisk, the stake holder, publishes another to the effect that he has handed over the main stake, \$10,000 to Hyer - Sullivan also advised his friends, in another, that under the decision of the referee they must pay their bets - though he insists that by the rules of the ring, he should have been declared the victor.

Constable Cook arrived at Philadelphia, on Sunday, from Baltimore, with a requisition for Hyer, and officer Gifford left that place the same afternoon with a requisition for Sullivan.

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