

New York Herald
June 26, 1910

Never a Man So Fit as Jeffries, Says Jack London

“His Mighty Thighs Remind One of the Legendary Teutonic Warrior”

Muscles all of the Right Kind

“Play in Matted Masses on His Back and Leap Into Twisted Rolls on His Arms”

Fight Will Not be Short

Whoever Wins Will Have to Work For It, And Combat Will be a Great One, He Says

Despite the scribes and sports who fell to the rumor that Jeff was to box at three this morning and who journeyed vainly out to Moana Springs at that unearthly time, Jeff himself selected the perfectly respectable hour of 10 A.M. He skipped rope and shadow-boxed to the time of many tunes which he whistled himself instead of panting for air in the high altitude, and the punching bag rat-tatted to the left of Mendelssohn’s “Spring Song.”

For another thing, he evidenced a remarkably good temper and cheerfulness. He has passed through the strain and drag of his long and terrific training, and, with that far behind him, perforce yields to the good spirits that are the emanation of perfect well-being. All through his couple of hours of hard work to-day he was kittenish and frisky in a huge way, full of joshes and bubbling over with grim laughter. One does not imagine him laughing heartily ever. It is his nature and his makeup to hint of grimness, even when he is jovial to the top of his bent.

For, after the rope-skipping, he stripped and showed the wonderfully built man he is from the ground up. His legs were like columns—not gnarled and knotty columns, but clean-swelling columns, soft-lined and in keeping with the soft-lined strength of the rest of him. There is little doubt that in the history of the ring there was never a heavyweight so well and symmetrically proportioned.

His thighs are so mighty that they remind one inevitably of the legendary Teutonic warrior who, by the grip of his thighs, made his war horse groan beneath him. It would have to be an armor-plated, steel-crossed horse that Jeffries could not make groan.

Lean-bellied as a Greek athlete, the muscles of his torso begin their long, deep swell outward and upward from the waist. His back muscles play in matted masses, while those of the shoulders and biceps leap into a twisted roll at the slightest uplift of the arms. And they are all the right kind of muscle. They are not hard and knotted like those of the professional strong men and weight lifters. They do not bind and hold him by their inflexibility and weight.

And this is something that the uninitiated do not understand. While those that knew looked on and gloried in Jeff’s condition, someone remarked naively that they were surprised at

his softness and at the sheath of fat that encased him. Fat; there is not any fat on him. Those soft mounds and ridges and rolls are the finest grade and quality of muscle a man can possess. One might as well call a cat fat because, when it is relaxed, its muscles become all velvety softness. That may best describe Jeff's muscular condition at the present moment—a velvety softness, splendid and superb.

Take one of those soft pads of Jeff and watch it. Suddenly it leaps and quivers, takes form and bulk, is alive with swift and excessive energy, then relaxes and sinks back and down into the soft pad that it was. Now that is a muscle. It is the real thing.

And let it be said that Jeff right now is fit and ready to go into the ring. The best thing for him to do from now till the Fourth is to go fishing and to take only moderate exercise. He is at concert pitch and ready for the summons, "let her go."

The floor on which he skipped rope was very slippery, and once he went down. But the quick play of those supple, powerful muscles saved him. He is a heavy man, and to fall on his kneecap meant serious injury. You and I and most all the rest of us under the same circumstances would have received the injury. Not so with Jeffries. Like lightning the foot and leg muscles of the leg that slipped flexed into action, taking the weight of the falling body and saving the knee.

That Jeffries is no mean judge of distance was shown when, in the shadow boxing, he made occasional passes at the noses and jaws of his training staff. They were stiff and snappy punches and hooks, yet they passed or whistled by the mark with no more than half an inch or an inch to spare.

Out at Rick's it was the same old Arthur Johnson who sparred fast and furious with three of his sparring partners in rapid succession. I should not like to be a sparring partner in Johnson's camp. Kaufman was glad when his four rounds were ended, and Cotton showed no signs of regret when his turn was finished. Both had been cuffed and pummeled to the queen's taste, both were short of wind and complaining of the altitude, and both were bleeding profusely from mouth and nose. And Johnson, unconcerned, was taking on a third man and making him look serious as he went after him.

One thing is certain, barring a lucky punch, which is an exceedingly unlikely happening, the fight on July 4th is not going to be a short one. Johnson is so clever on the defensive that it would take a long time for Jeff to get him, while, on the other hand, Jeff is no slouch at defense himself, and he is such a behemoth that it would not be in two punches, nor forty, that Johnson could get him. Whoever gets it will have to work for it and work hard.

It was the same old Jack Johnson of a year and a half ago, looking, if anything, stronger and better than in his Sydney fight. He had his full bag of familiar tricks with him—the old cleverness of defense, the old letting his opponent hit him repeatedly on his unguarded stomach; the old dreaming and sudden awakening to fierce onslaught for three or four seconds; the old placing of his hand on his opponent's biceps to stop a blow; the old smiling into the camera while in a clinch and the old rubbering trance-like at the audience or passing of facetious remarks while at the same time duffing his opponent or blocking and withstanding a violent assault.

Johnson seemed to take to the altitude well. Beyond profuse sweating under the hot sun there was no evidence of exertion. When Kaufman sparred with him the former devoted himself almost wholly to ripping at Johnson's stomach. It may be that this is in anticipation of the terrible rips to be expected from Jeff.

Make no mistake, the fight on the Fourth is going to be a great one. There are only two heavy weights that are at the top notch, and they are Jeff and Johnson.