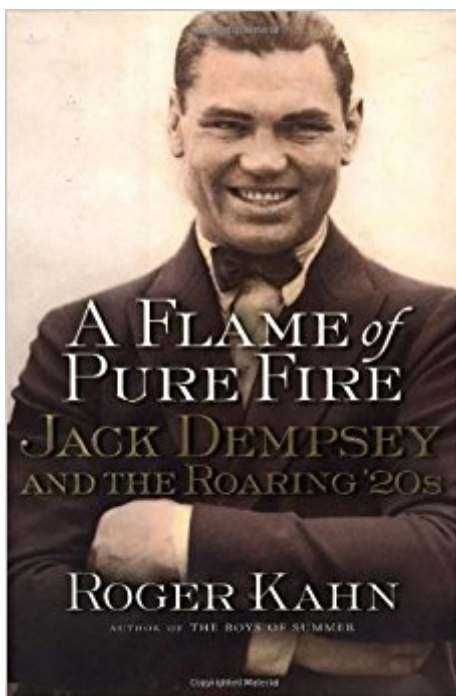


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A Flame Of Pure Fire: Jack Dempsey And The Roaring '20s



Synopsis

Jack Dempsey was perfectly suited to the time in which he fought, the time when the United States first felt the throb of its own overwhelming power. For eight years and two months after World War I, Dempsey, with his fierce good looks and matchless dedication to the kill, was heavyweight champion of the world. *A Flame of Pure Fire* is the extraordinary story of a man and a country growing to maturity in a blaze of strength and exuberance that nearly burned them to ash. Hobo, roughneck, fighter, lover, millionaire, movie star, and, finally, a gentleman of rare generosity and sincerity, Dempsey embodied an America grappling with the confusing demands of preeminence. Dempsey lived a life that touched every part of the American experience in the first half of the twentieth century. Roger Kahn, one of our preeminent writers about the human side of sport, has found in Dempsey a subject that matches his own manifold talents. A friend of Dempsey's and an insightful observer of the ways in which sport can measure a society's evolution, Kahn reaches a new and exciting stage in his acclaimed career with this book. In the story of a man John Lardner called "a flame of pure fire, at last a hero," Roger Kahn finds the heart of America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jack Dempsey (1895-1983) launched the age of big-money, high-visibility boxing with his 1919 defeat of heavyweight champion Jess Willard. Then when Gene Tunney beat Dempsey in 1927, assisted by a referee's controversial "long count," it foreshadowed the end of an era. With his good looks, free-and-easy ways, and roughneck background--including an ex-wife who was a prostitute

before and after their marriage--Dempsey was the perfect hero for the brawling, cynical 1920s. Even his sensational trial in 1920 on charges of draft evasion and "white slavery" (he was acquitted) suited the decade's appetite for lurid tabloid stories. Roger Kahn, who met the fighter in the mid-1950s, takes an idiosyncratic approach to biography. He begins with a 1960 encounter in Dempsey's restaurant, moves back to the fighter's hard-knocks apprenticeship, covers Dempsey's childhood after an account of the 1920 trial, and intersperses snapshots of the American scene with recollections and reflections from the champ throughout. This technique pays off. Readers get a vivid sense of the period and of Dempsey as its hard-living but honorable exemplar, and they come to share Kahn's affection and respect for the thoughtful, generous man he became in later years. Squeamish readers, be warned: along with the cultural history, there's lots of boxing action, graphically described. --Wendy Smith

"He was the wild and raucous champion of the wild and raucous 1920s," writes Kahn (*The Boys of Summer*, etc.) of the legendary heavyweight William Harrison "Jack" Dempsey. This "hobo, roughneck, brawler, fighter, slacker, lover, millionaire, gentleman" provides Kahn a vehicle for chronicling the jazz age itself. Dempsey emerged out of the still-wild West, having fought in mining towns throughout Utah and Colorado, lean and hungry for success as his country stood on the precipice of unprecedented wealth and power. His transformation from rural tough, the "Manassa Mauler," into the preeminent athlete in the world marked the arrival of sport as big business in a prosperous new America. When he won the heavyweight championship in 1919, Dempsey did it in front of 20,000 people. Less than eight years later, he drew a crowd of 120,000 for his first bout with Gene Tunney (which he lost), still the largest ever in boxing, and made a fortune. In graceful and fluid prose, Kahn presents the con men, gangsters, prostitutes and starlets who inhabited the turbulent, Prohibition-era story of Jack Dempsey. The larger-than-life storytellers of the age—legendary sportswriters like Grantland Rice, Ring Lardner and Damon Runyon—feature prominently. Kahn delivers a performance of which any of those whiskey-swilling, rakish scribes would have been proud. (Oct.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

A Flame of Pure Fire Ordered from Kindle. This is one of the best books I've read in a long time, and I read many books. The book brings you into the exciting, and oft times, seamy world of the 1920's. You read about boxing. If you're interested, or merely curious, this is one of the best books on boxing by a great writer (Roger Kahn) who knows boxing. You get inside the world of promoting, which is a lucrative and artistic (and often crooked) sport unto itself. This is a book about Jack

Dempsey, a very sympathetic book, which puts the lie to the allegation that Dempsey would not fight Blacks. This simply is not true, including for the Heavyweight Crown. This was a great book and a great read.

Great book, easy read - author provides good information about the time period in addition to the story of Dempsey's life.

...that places Jack Dempsey's personality and career in context with the culture that he lived in. A lot about the Roaring 20's, the Depression, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Charles Lindbergh, Babe Ruth and other people from the era; also about other boxers. Maybe too much detail about culture and society if you just want to know about the boxer, but I thought it was a great portrait of the man. Even better, the author clearly loves Jack Dempsey and deeply respects everything that he is about. After reading the book I understand why.

Roger Kahn has done a good job in writing this book. I have read many books about Dempsey and the time period in which he flourished but I found out a few things I did not know before in reading this book. There is a lot of insight into the characters that made up the time period and I found that exciting. You know that books like this are going to start becoming rare because the last living people who had contact with people like Dempsey are passing from the scene.

This was an excellent book about Jack Dempsey and the time period he lived in. His mother was reading a book about a great fighter when Jack was born so she felt as if this was prophetic for her son. His early desire to be a fighter and his commitment to make it happen against all odds definitely set him apart. Though a lot more worldly in his pursuits (women, Hollywood) than Tunney, he seemed to have more of a fierce fighting style.

Dempsey was a fascinating character, and this biography captures him in all his complexity in context, within the times when he grew up and fought. A thorough, brilliant account of a man, one of the most aggressive and savage in the ring (witness his destruction of Willard), but gentle and easy-going outside of it, a soft touch, giving away a lot of his money to fighters down on their luck.

This book is a great tribute to a great man; my Godfather, Jack Dempsey. I remember fondly the visits my father would make to Jack's home. Jack was always a gentle, polite man when he wasn't

in the ring being the Manassas Mauler. Whenever my father needed to buy a new car, he'd ask Jack for a loan. Jack never hesitated to advance my father any amount he needed. A more kind, generous and honorable man I've seldom met.

I always enjoy Roger Kahn's writing....he takes the reader right inside the ring and the life of Jack Dempsey. There is so much history and societal comment, about what was happening during Dempsey's champion days. The writing is excellent and he is able to make Dempsey come alive on the pages, even with the blemishes and the highlights. I liked it and would recommend it to other readers, especially the sports enthusiasts. Biographies are often dull, but Roger made sure that you kept flipping the pages. You could almost feel Dempsey's aggressive, fighting passion.

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