

Contents

Illustrations	9
Preface	11
Prologue: The English Prize Ring	19
1. Hats in the Ring	34
“The Tremendous Man of Colour”	34
First Blood	36
Professors of Pugilism	47
Ideology and the Ring	56
2. The First American Champions	69
The Rise of “Yankee” Sullivan	69
The Battle of Hastings	73
“The Great \$10,000 Match between Sullivan and Hyer”	81
3. The Age of Heroes	98
“The Good Time Coming”	98
The Era of John Morrissey	108
The Fate of Champions	123
4. The Meanings of Prize Fighting	129
Working-Class Culture in Antebellum Cities	129
Meaning in Mayhem	136
The Rites of Violence	144

CONTENTS

5. Triumph and Decline	148
“The Great Contest for the Championship of the World”	148
Civil Wars	159
“. . . The Gangs Who Rage and Howl at the Ropes”	164
6. “Fight Like a Gentleman, You Son of a Bitch, If You Can”	179
The Rise of Sports	179
The Strenuous Life	185
Fighting Clerks, Boxing Brahmins, Vigorous Victorians	194
7. The End of the Bare-Knuckle Era	207
“My Name’s John L. Sullivan and I Can Lick Any Son-of-a-Bitch Alive”	207
The New Order	216
“. . . Nigh New Orleans upon an Emerald Plain . . .”	227
“The Champion of All Champions”	237
Epilogue: The Manly Art	248
Notes	255
Index	307