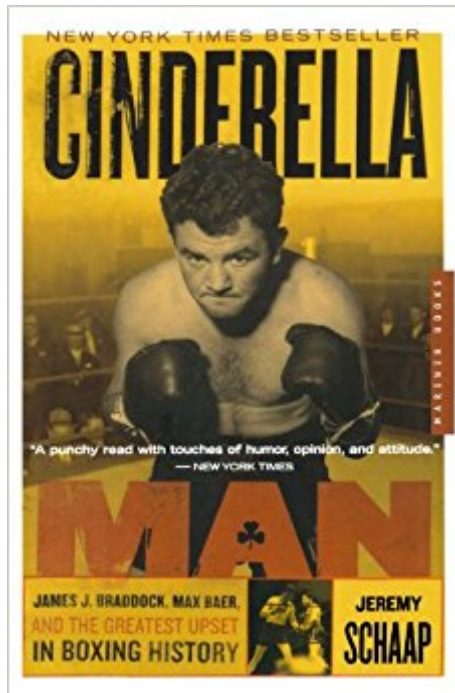


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Cinderella Man: James J. Braddock, Max Baer, And The Greatest Upset In Boxing History



Synopsis

A riveting tale of perseverance in the face of hardship, *Cinderella Man* is the chronicle of the boxer James J. Braddock, whose exceptional story of achievement against all odds was the subject of a major motion picture. Braddock, dubbed the Cinderella Man, staged the greatest comeback in fighting history, rising in the span of twelve months from the relief rolls to a face-off against the heavyweight champion, Max Baer. Against the gritty backdrop of Depression-era New York, Schaap paints a vivid picture of the fight world in its golden age, evoking a time when boxing resonated with a country trying desperately to get back on its feet.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

F. Scott Fitzgerald once said that there were no second acts to American lives. Yet, a fellow Irishman (one much less gloomy) proved him very, very wrong. This book is the homage that James J. Braddock has always deserved. Braddock's amazing story has been slowly fading from public memory, as well as the memory of modern boxing fans, steadily over the years. This book puts things right. Author, Jeremy Schaap, has written a Godsend of a book for Braddock fans, and his clean, direct style is perfectly suited to telling this story. If Schaap were a boxer, he would be referred to as a cagey, "cute" fighter; meaning that it might appear that he isn't doing much, but what he does counts and he will be there at the end of the fight with his glove raised. To put it another way, there is nothing prosy in Schaap's writing; but he really knows the way to hit the right spots. Like any very good writer, he recognizes true moments of drama and plays these moments

with a pure economy of words that come at you from the blue. Bang! Suddenly I found myself very moved and didn't even see it coming. James J. Braddock was in so many ways the perfect product of the Great Depression. He was a washed-up fighter, his best years behind him. He had been cleaned out by the depression, desperately trying to feed his family by taking odd jobs at the docks in New Jersey, even going on relief (which so humiliated him he wouldn't tell anyone, not even his mother). Yet dock work had made him lean and tough, so when his second chance came, the hard knocks of life had prepared him. People loved him not because he was white, or Irish. Americans loved him because he was like them - all of them - and he represented a hope.

James J. Braddock wasn't a great Heavyweight Champ; he lost the title in his first defense bout after he'd won it. But his is, perhaps, the greatest comeback story of 20th century pugilism. The CINDERELLA MAN had heart. Author Jeremy Schaap's book begins with the commencement of Braddock's comeback in June 1934 with his victory over "Corn" Griffin. Jim's last previous fight had been nine months earlier, at the end of which, with a right hand that had been repeatedly broken and numerous defeats under his belt, he was thought to be washed up. To the point of the Griffin match-up, he was barely able to feed his family with odd jobs on the New York and New Jersey docks and welfare help; it was the Depression, and Braddock's fortunes were at their rock bottom. Then, Schaap regresses in time to the period 1926-33 when Jim fought as a light heavyweight, almost winning that title in 1929. The author alternates the early Braddock saga with the same for the 1929-1934 career of Max Baer, who won the heavyweight title from Primo Canera, also in June 1934, thus setting up the confrontation that established Jim's fame and won him the heavyweight crown, the Braddock-Baer bout in June 1935. Schaap's summaries of Braddock's eighty-three fights and Baer's forty-seven prior to their epic battle are, almost by necessity in a volume of only 276 pages, spotty in detail, yet are sufficient to establish the two fighters' characters. There is an adequate section of photographs, as well as the complete ring records of both Braddock and Baer and a complete listing of all the heavyweight division champs since John L. Sullivan. (Who is Hasim Rahman, champ in 2001, for Pete's sake?!) For a boxing aficionado, CINDERELLA MAN is perhaps, despite its relative brevity, a must read.

Before reading this book I was vaguely familiar with James J. Braddock as someone interested in boxing, especially Heavyweights. As a side note, that essentially stopped several years ago when boxing degenerated into an alphabet soup set of "champions" and it became hard to maintain any interest in the sport, but I digress. I had seen the movie "Cinderella Man," based on this book, so I

was curious about those things in Braddock's life that Movies always have to cut out, or change. So my first comment is that, as much as I liked the movie, the movie has only a slight resemblance to this real life story. Much was left out (obviously due to screen time constraints), but also much was changed. This book provides much more background and life story information about Braddock than the movie could ever show, and it's all good and written very well. The author details Braddock's struggles (and successes) not only in the ring but in life, drawn vividly against the Great Depression. Braddock was a rock solid, hard working, honest, and honorable man. He personified the Horatio Alger story, in which good things happen to those who are good people and work hard at being so. The book also serves as an in-depth reference and insight into what many call the glory years of boxing, with names like Jack Dempsey, Jim Corbett, Max Schmeling, Joe Louis, Primo Carnera, Max Baer, and others. Max Baer is portrayed completely differently than in the movie. In the movie he was a wiseguy smart aleck who had killed two men in the ring. In the book, he was basically a reasonably nice guy with immense physical gifts but very little interest in boxing. The fight between Baer and Braddock for the Heavyweight Championship is completely different than in the movie.

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