

THE FIGHT GAME

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Singers	Musicians	Named Speakers	
Ewan MacColl	Alf Edwards conc+trom	Peter Keenan	Walter McGowan
Peggy Seeger	Peggy Seeger guit+banj+mand	Walter McGowan	Bill Shreeve ¹
Gordon McCulloch	Alfie Kahn clar+picc+harm	Billy Biddles	George Biddles
Bob Davenport	Bryan Day guit+elec-guit	Henry Cooper	Jim Cooper
John Reavey	Ronnie Hughes trum	Billy Davies	Thomas Duffy
	Johnny Lambe trum	Thomas Fitzpatrick	Joe Gans
	Dave Swarbrick fid	Johnny Mann	Mrs Sheila Mann
		Alex Griffiths	Mrs W MacGowan
		Wally Swift	Arthur Musson
		Maurice Walker	Jim Wicks
		Billy James	Sonny Wilson
		W Barrington Dalby	Johnny Prescott

¹ Bill Shreeve did the skipping

Text

1

**Twas in Tierra del Fuego in South Americay
Where the Roosian challenged Morrissey, and unto him did say
'I see you are a fighting man and wear the belt I see.
What do you say will you consent to have a round with me?'**

**Then up spoke Bold Jack Morrissey with a heart so brave and true.
'I am a gallant Irishman that never did subdue.
I can fight the Yankee, The Saxon, Bull or Bear
In honour of bold Paddy's land and still the belt I'll wear.'**

**They both shook hands, stepped in the ring commencing for to fight
It filled each Irish heart...**

That's years ago. Today, boxing - it's like playing tennis.

You know he's the big boss and he's able to keep him at bay. He just, as I say, he's confident.

You speak to any old fighter, and they talk about today's generation with disgust.

These fighters today, they wouldn't live with our fighters. And yet, I've actually seen fight films

run at normal speed, of Gentleman Jim Corbett when he fought Bob Fitzsimmons, they moved so slow, anybody who got hit by them wanted nicking for loitering. You know what I mean. That is why those fighters used to be able to go 20, 30, 40, 50 rounds. You know, they used to start Tuesday night and finish up Wednesday morning. I can't agree with you there Nosh.... Now listen, everything has improved. Racing, athletics, everything has improved. Even the crooks have improved.

2

**There's a game some call the fight game, and some the noble art.
Blokes who play this game need bags of courage bags of heart,
It's a rough game, a tough game, needing guts and skill,
And you'll never make a boxer if you haven't got the will.**

In the ring, he's the king, who can get knocked down and come up for the kill.

**It's a noble sport, a manly sport, and there's no better sight
Than two good boys in prime condition squaring for the fight.
Eight rounds, ten rounds, round the ring they go,
A-weaving dodging punching jabbing, dealing blow for blow.**

It's a test, of the best, and the best man lays the other fella low.

He deserves a medal for his courage that kid, he's a good loser. What a smashing loser though.

I loved the game, because everybody loved me, you see. They say I'm punch drunk, but, I can't say I am. It's just the way I walk, you see. People think I'm drunk, but I'm not, it's a matter of being punch drunk. I've received some real good tannings, and I've give some back. And I'm satisfied that I enjoyed every moment of 'un.

**Oh the boxing is a sport that sorts the men out from the boys,
It's great for building character, it's marvellous for boys,
It's a great game, a straight game, calls for discipline,
Teaches you to give or take a bashing with a grin.**

You're alone, on your own, when you're up there in the ring and wading in.

Boxing's the hardest sport out, and it's no game for anybody to be messing about. You can't be messing about.

**It takes a man of spirit for to get up off the floor,
To take eight rounds of punishment and still come up for more.
It's the right sport, the fight sport, tough but full of grace
For skill and strength and stamina the silver ring's the place.**

Hear the bell, hear the yells, when the boys go in there fighting face to face.

It's a rough game, but you've got to keep at it. You've got to take hard knocks and give 'em.

He had a war. Boland finished up with five stitches in his head and... During the contest we really got to work and, and the ref - we knocked the referee down and och - they called it a bloodbath, the ring was completely covered with blood. Boland got a big gash across his forehead, you know, and we continued till when about the eighth round we both... the referee took us apart and says now I want a cleaner fight this is getting a bit out of hand. Boland says to me it's all right for this bum but I can't even see you for blood, and the two of us started to laugh you know, and we got to work again.

You're alone, on your own.

3

Boxing to me is the greatest character builder in the world. Anybody can press a button and blow a ship up, anybody can use an atom bomb, anybody can pick up a big whip, and whip you, anybody can stick a knife into you, anybody can pull a trigger. But where's the man with the character as can take a punch on the nose and keep his temper and keep control of himself?

Well, professional boxing's a tough racket. And so is sticking a bank up.

If you're hurt you'll get up and fight. And that's life, because when you're born, your life starts to fight. You're fighting against something. If it's not in a boxing ring it's against life.

I think it's a natural instinct in a man to be better than the next man. I mean you don't go in the ring trying to knock the other feller silly. You go in there just to prove that you're the better man and to think that you've outsmarted the other man.

How can you justify one man punching the other by cutting him and keep punching and punching. It doesn't add up at all.

It is not ludo, it's not tiddlywinks, it's fighting, and inevitably the participants must get hurt.

The farmer fights the insect world and battles with the weeds.

The fisherman fights the angry sea and takes the food he needs.

Get in the ring and come out fighting, in and win the purse.

There's a bloke who'll walk all over you if you don't get him first.

Self-preservation.

There are men who'll fight like angry lions for an extra bob a day.

Others'll fight as hard to dock a penny off your pay.

Get in the ring and come out fighting, in and win the purse.

There's a bloke who'll fight you to your knees if you don't get him first.

You're a fighter, you get higher. You fight to get a comfortable home, you fight to get a living.

**Men will fight because of hate and men will fight for love.
Men will fight with guns and bombs, give me a boxing glove.
Get in the ring and come out fighting, get and win the purse.
There's a man in there who'll mow you down if you don't get him first.**

One of the greatest shocks I ever had in my life was when I was invited to the House of Commons, and I had a seat in the Strangers Gallery. It was so small, and I looked down, and it was a shock to think there had sat ordinary human beings, two arms two legs same as me, with tongues in their heads, and they'd agreed to organise the killing of millions of people. And yet in that same house, a jump up there, screeching their head off about a sturdy individual business like boxing.

When you think about it, sometimes you think I'm a fool for doing this, you know, I could finish up on a cold slab in a morgue or something like that.

Well it's, you've got to demolish this man or be demolished. That's what you're in there for.

These things'll happen, in any type of work, any employment at all, there's always somebody getting hurt.

**You fight for health and wealth and everything that life can give,
And what's the odds if some get hurt you've got to fight to live.
Get in the ring and come out fighting, in and win the purse.
There's a bloke in there who'll batter you if you don't get him first.**

There's always been fighting, even if it's only over women.

**There's some that fight for money and there's some that fight for fame.
There's some that lose and some that win, it's all part of the game.
Get in the ring and come out fighting, in and win the purse.
There's a bloke who's out to lay you low if you don't get him first.**

You're talking about reality, and the fight gymnasium is reality.

**They say the fight game's brutal, so is life you will agree,
But if one of us must take a belting rather you than me.
Get in the ring and come out fighting, in and win the purse.
Wait for the bell and be there waiting, in boy get in first.**

When that bell goes you're fighting for your living. You hear everybody saying, if I win this fight, just a twenty pound fight, next week I'm on thirty pounds.

Economic necessity. I've never met one in my life that went into the boxing game for the sheer love of it. It's always that drive to get some money. Or perish.

Come all you gallant fighting men who know the silver ring.

I never knew any earl's son be a professional fighter, I never knew any millionaire's son be a professional fighter. It's a poor man's job

You lads of skill and courage; of a noble sport we sing

Short of winning the pool, I don't know a quicker way to financial stabilisation than professional boxing.

You welterweights and heavies, bantams, middleweights and flies.

Whether they go in for one round or whether they go in for ten rounds they go in for one thing. Money.

All you who fight for love of sport, where glory is the prize.

And I, I used to take stock every time I fought. Before the fight I'd say, if this is my last fight, what have I got in the bank?

All fighters have got to come off of poor families. Before you become a boxer you've got to be poor, you know, off a big family, or a poor family. But you don't get a doctor's son coming to be a boxer because he's, he's been spoiled, he's had a good upbringing, he's never wanted for any... Fighters have got to need something, got to be a hungry man. See, a hungry fighter's the best fighter. They're born not made you know. Myself I came off a big family there was three brothers and three sisters, and I was in the middle but anything I had I had to fight because we never had any money, or... Anything we got was through hard toil, you know. I was born in Partick, the poor end of Glasgow, you know. My father was a street hawker.

5

**Come on Johnny, and put 'em up Johnny, I'll belt you black and blue,
Stand up and fight, you dirty wee tyke, and show what you can do.**

**Born in a Partick single-end, in a crowded close was raised,
Fought from the day that I could walk, been fighting all my days
Fed on a diet of fish and chips, breathed the shipyard reek,
And all the other kids picked on me, for I was small and weak.**

**It was come on Johnny, now put 'em up Johnny, I'll belt you black and blue,
Stand up and fight, you dirty wee tyke, and show what you can do.**

I was brought up in orphanage you see, and you just had to fight in orphanages. I've had girls beat me up in orphanages.

If you didn't learn you got hit like, you know.

**I fought the tears when the teacher's strap made stripes across me hands.
I ditched the blood from my streaming nose when I fought with the rival gangs.
I had to fight to be recognised in the only world I knew.
I had to fight to prove to myself that I'm as good as you.**

**It was come on Johnny, now put 'em up Johnny, I'll belt you black and blue,
Stand up and fight, you dirty wee tyke, and show what you can do.**

As a kid I was a lump of wood, you know, wasn't very clever. When I started to box, and I found out this was something I was good at, I used to get a lot of medals, I would have done it for nothing just because I was good at a thing, I really loved boxing.

**I went to a hop in the Barrowland asked a lassie to dance
When a dirt big fella says Beat it, runt you have nae got a chance.
So I up and I belted him with my left and I felled him with my right,
And I danced away with the lassie and I took her hame that night.**

**It was come on Johnny, and put 'em up Johnny, I'll belt you black and blue,
Stand up and fight, you dirty wee tyke, and show what you can do.**

It's a good thing to be able to look after yourself.

Everybody wants to fight when they're young.

I like fighting. I like to feel the gaffer and the more fights I win the better I feel. Probably big-headedness. Perhaps that's it.

I think when you're young like that, I think it's the glory, more than the money. Being a professional at sixteen, you think it's great, you think it's good, you know.

Think we used to talk... he was boxing last night, as he went by, he'd just, give a little swagger, I mean, walking.

Everyone kind of looked up to you.

6

**When you're a fighter you're different.
You walk in a certain way.
Everybody's eager to shake your hand,
Everybody knows you're a fighting man -
There's Johnny boy, you hear 'em say.**

He's definitely one of the top blokes. I mean I read the Boxing News every week.

Kids all think you're a hero. Girls give you the come-on look.
And they sidle up to you with their pens in their hand,
Eyes all shining and they think it's grand
When you sign their little autograph books.

You've got fellas who, who sneak round corners to have a look at you like, you know.

Strangers clap you on the shoulder.
You've got that money smell.
You're a man of the world and you travel by air.
You're doing all right for the lolly is there,
And the glory it is there as well.

You're a local boy and you're climbing.
You've come a long way, you're a star.
Everybody's eager to share the joy,
Everybody knows old Johnny boy,
In his E-type Jaguar.

It's something inside you, you think, in later years, I could have been good there, I could have made a lot of money. You see these top professionals going around in Jaguars and things like that, you think I might get a bit frustrated later on, I might say well that could have been me you know.

You've got a nice house in the suburbs.
The Joneses are left behind.
Your clobber's handmade and costs plenty of dough,
Your watch cost a bundle and your shoes also.
Johnny Boy's one of the spending kind.

He's that type of fighter, he's an all-action fighter, and everybody likes him.

So up with the cheering and yelling.
Up with the sport of the ring.
Up with the noble art of defence.
Up with the pounds and the shillings and pence,
For they compensate for everything.

If they've led the life of a poor man, you know, a man been never had nothing in his life, it's a chance for him to get ahead. So many people have been in the boxing business they didn't have food t'eat, at one time. Now they've got all they want, you know. Everything they want, see. It's a life, it's a new life.

So when I first put the gloves on and a new career began,
It was nae such a change for me , I'd aye been a hard wee man,
And all my life I've fought for free since I began to walk.

From now on I said I'll use my fists tae mak the money talk.

**So come on let's go now, I'm a pro,
I'll fight you for a purse.
I'm married to the fighting noo
For better or for worse**

It's a good enough sport. It doesnae become a sport when you get unnecessarily punished. It's only a game it's a fact, for the living that's in it. To be a good fighter you've got to lead a hard life. Got to submit yourself to the hermit class for a period of say anything between at least three and five years.

7

Then come on, strip off young Johnny boy there's training to be done.

It's most essential, training. Well it's got to be like a machine.

No more foaming pints, no birds, no late nights from now on.

The first thing is, you've got to have 'em up early enough in the morning.

It's up in the morning, bright and early while the dawn's still on its way.

**Before the noise and hurly burly of the streets,
Before the steady beat of day,
Before the traffic sounds,
Before the marching feet are factory bound,
You're out of bed and groping for your training clobber.**

I wake in the morning, I'm up at five o'clock in the morning getting them ready for the road work at six.

**Grab a slice of toast, there's time to make a cuppa
Mind you spread the butter thin, go easy on the sugar.
Easy or I'll wake the family. Creep out.
Hurry past the sleeping houses on the street.
Behind the curtains and the window blinds there's folk asleep.
Lucky people!**

That's it. That's the hardest part about boxing is the training. You've got to get up in the morning, you go to run say four, five miles. You go back home, you clean up, and all the time you're working hard.

**In your tracksuit in your plimsolls doing road work every day
Lift 'em Johnny. Keep your knees up.**

Nice and easy Johnny keep your breathing steady.
How much longer? Must have done four miles already.
Out and working at the start of early morning.
Watch your breathing Johnny boy and stop your yawning.
Past the Gaumont in the dark, ran three times around the park
Along the empty tarmacadam sweating
Saw the mist that curdled in the rhododendron bushes
Three minutes shadow boxing, hooks and starting rushes,
Feinting, darting, jabbing, Johnny's on again.
Got to pay a visit see a man about a dog,
Won't be a minute.
Make it snappy.

Roadwork is just a case of running, walking, shadow boxing and some exercises in the road, particularly breathing exercises after you get to a period where you've done between three and five minutes, stop for a breathing period, deep heavy breathing, particularly in the morning when the air's good.

A little breather then the final lap.
Up the high street past the laundrymat the supermart the Wimpy bar.
Now it's good and light. Passing the building site where the cranes stand.
Three minutes exercises shake your hands relax your shoulders.

You're an oilcan there Jack.

Knees bending. Arms swinging. Trunk turning. Johnny!

A great feeling to know you're 100% fit. When I was out training I used to think, Ho, this is marvellous, an hour's training in the morning to get your body in real condition and you're getting paid for it.

On again another mile no lagging.
Watch your plates of meat, boy look they're dragging
I'm slipping.
OK OK OK OK you've done your hour.
Off to the gym get a shower and a brisk rub down.
And we'll do some skipping.

8

I like all my boxers to be perfect skippers. Sometimes I do as high as 25 minutes with them without a break doing all sorts of exercises with the skipping ropes. It's not just a case of 1,2 1,2 1,2 you skip the stride jump and there's crossing ropes, knocking them to the sides and bashing about from side to side, they're doing the highland dancing, everything with skipping ropes.

Every day we're here busy at the skipping

In the flashing ropes, jumping leaping tripping.

**When we're on the job, feel the floor a-shaking
Up and down we bob, till our feet are aching.**

Come on now get them up, right up, right up, right up, right up, up, up, up.

**Got to do it well, it's tough when you begin it
You think that bloody bell will never sound three minutes**

**Got to keep it light, on your toes you're prancing,
When you do it right, looks as if you're dancing.**

I said highland dancing ,Fagin, not clog walloping.

**One two three four keep your knees up mind your breathing rhythm,
One two three four one two three four that's the stuff to give them.**

Last time?

**It helps your footwork in the ring it makes you light upon your pins
And many a lad has saved his skin because he did his skipping.**

Time!

9

When you're training all right, you go on the ball, everything's going fine, you can hit the speedball you keep it going you feel good. I mean as you get fitter you feel better. You push yourself harder as well. And so it never comes easy. Your training for boxing never comes easy. You're pushing yourself all the time.

Now just stand near the bag and get yourself plenty of room, you know what you've got to do, that's the boy, come on now.

**Get at the punchbag, bash it smash it punch it
belt it Johnny, belt it Johnny.**

**Give it the lot now all that you've got now,
belt it Johnny, belt it Johnny.**

**Hit with your weight kid rock it block it sock it
belt it Johnny, belt it Johnny.**

**Hit it away kid this is your play kid,
belt it Johnny, belt it Johnny.**

**A left and a right now hit it whip it rip it
bbelt it Johnny belt it Johnny.**

**In with a stab and a couple of jabs and
belt it Johnny, belt it Johnny.**

**All of your strength and wing it swing it fling it
belt it Johnny, belt it Johnny.
In and around lad on the rebound lad,
belt it Johnny belt it Johnny.**

LAST TIME

You must adapt your boy's own personality to his boxing.

TIME!

Whew how long was that? Three hours! The watch don't lie mate.

You can always tell when they're fit. They start grumbling when they've done three minutes.

That's their living. And they must do those things to win.

When you're ready, time.

**Imagine the bag is the bloke in the ring, it's either you or him.
Which of the two of you gets laid low depends on the power you can pack in a blow,
Depends on the way that you work every day when you're punching the bag in the gym.
So give it a wham boy jag it flog it slog it,
belt it Johnny, belt it Johnny.
Make every punch felt, make it a real belt,
belt it Johnny, belt it Johnny.**

..now when you're turning a wee left hook up, pivot round to your right on your left toe, now just try it, a wee circular movement, you get onto the ball of your feet and just pivot round, and punch as you do so. Come on now just a wee quick turn, a wee quick turn. There's no bend in your left knee, there should be. That's it. That's the idea.

**Working at the speed ball,
punching away,
Need a lot of speed ball,
punching away,
Hit with calculation,
punching away,
Helps coordination,
punching away,**

**Hit and mind you place it,
punching away,**

Got to learn to pace it,
punching away,
Keep the speed ball moving,
punching away,
And you'll be improving,
punching away,

Got to hit with both hands,
punching away,
See that every punch lands,
punching away,
Left and right in rhythm,
punching away,
In a steady rhythm,
punching away.

TIME!

This is where I earn my money, in the training room here. When I get it drilled into me and drilled into me and when I come into the ring everything I do I just do it instinctively. You know I don't have to think about it.

If a fighter's good he's never out of training.
He's in the gym there every day.
That's where he works to keep his body fit,
That's where he goes to sweat it out,
That's where he learns his trade,
That's where the champion boxers all are made.
That's where you go to learn the ABC of boxing.

Well you work to a peak, you train to get to a peak.

A trainer knows... I've a few year's experience when a fighter's coming to his peak and then you've got to be very careful that you don't go over it.

We're two days away from the fight now. We just turn over and gently cool him down. To keep his fitness there, keep his mind right, and by then he should be raring to go.

10

There's such a hell of a lot of work to be done.

So you're busy at your training and you're feeling fine and trim,
And the mob of people stand and watch you working in the gym,
There's the pressman and the expert and the other kinds of bods,
And the bloke who's always there because he likes to know the odds.

I mean you've got managers there you've got trainers there you're talking boxing and that's the atmosphere.

**You've got trainers, sparring partners, all the blokes who do a job,
And the hangers-on the tappers who will touch you for a bob,
And there's Mr Big Promoter in his fancy motor car -
You can tell when he's approaching by the smell of his cigar.**

The first needs must be, is this thing going to be attractive to the public? And as far as I am concerned on the promotorial side, to get an ideal contest you must have aggression versus defence.

You see, even matching is careful, I mean even when they threw the Christians and the lions they didn't put a little Christian and two big lions in did they, eh? Probably put two Christians and one little lion.

You see these matches have got to be reasonably even.

**There's your trainer breathing down your neck, he's always by your side,
And how and when you do your work it's him that will decide,
He tells you what things you can eat and when to go to bed,
And he keeps you off the girls and makes you exercise instead.**

If the trainer gets the ruckings, then the manager gets the bouquets.

The manager, he signs the boy up, and takes 10% of the boy's earnings when the purse is up to £10. When it's over £10 the manager takes 25%. Now, a good manager, he's worth every penny.

Cos I have a saying that I don't want any drones in my organisation.

**Give me the tang of linament and the heavy smell of sweat,
Give me the boy who draws them in, give me the certain bet,
Give me the thud of leather and the music of the bell,
Give me the clink of money and I know that all is well.**

We quote to Johnny, and we talk to him, we say now Johnny, George does the managing, Alex does the promoting you do the fighting.

**Of all the music in the world give me the yelling mob,
The bloke who pays his fiver and the bloke who pays ten bob,
There's the sigh that greets the near miss and the groan that greets a fall,
Bot the roar that greets a knockout is the sweetest sound of all.**

The adulation of the mob. We're all the mob. Don't let us give ourselves airs, we're all the same. I love the mob as much as I love anything, I've always lived through the mob. They've always supported my fighters and myself. And without the mob I couldn't live.

So the boys have done their training and they both are feeling fine.
Their managers have done their stuff, the contracts have been signed,
There are fifteen thousand tickets out, publicity galore,
And the betting's on the local lad with the odds at six to four.

On the night, of the fight, when the blood begins to flow you'll hear them roar.

11

The programme is set up, and we call the weigh-in for one o'clock on the day of the tournament.

Nine stone ten. Denis Bonser nine stone ten. Come on, anybody else ready? Any more fighters?
Where are they? Johnny Angel around? Fred Powny, Stan Bishop, Bill Morgan, Mick Carney, Billy
Elliott... Clarence Prince eleven stone seven and a quarter pounds. Where's the Angel? Will the
boxers see the doctor before they go.

Stayed in bed, lay in this morning, seen the doctor, been weighed in,
Nothing to do until this evening, don't have to go down to the gym.
On the day of the fight you take it easy, try and relax as best you can,
Rest and keep your mind off boxing, try to forget you're a fighting man.

They're professionals and they're, they're supposed to be there to defend themselves, aren't they.

Shall I play some discs or try to sleep, or go to the pictures, which is best?
Oh what's the use when me mind is turning round and round, won't let me rest.

He likes to hit the bloke and look, and look back at you, admire his work, see.

The music plays but I don't hear it, the film unrolls but I am blind,
All I see and hear is boxing, nothing but boxing on me mind.

Johnny was always pleased when the night of the fight came. He knew then that his training was
over and you know, in the ring that night. About three weeks before the fight he was on edge all
the time. When you used to try and speak to him, you know, he used to get very irritable and it
used to take him all his time to speak to me sometimes.

Six o'clock, it's time to be moving, all dolled up and in good shape,
Check that you've packed your soap and towel, your gum shield and adhesive tape.
Say so long to your old lady, every time you go to fight,
You'd think you was off to an execution, tell her, Johnny you'll be all right.

12

Who would have a boxer for a husband or a son?
A fighter in the family means your worrying's never done.

**They leave the house as right as rain, they're off to win a prize,
But they get so knocked about they're often hard to recognise.**

I go to bed and wait till he comes home. You're back and you're thinking... and the door bangs and you think to yourself. Oh, I wonder if he's got any black eyes or cuts and that and you wait till he comes to bed and you half peep over the covers to have a look see if he's all right, he's got any scars or owt.

**They can't eat this, they can't eat that, they've got to watch their weight,
You'd think that they were starving when their eyes are on your plate.
They're in their beds at ten o'clock, they're off at the break of day,
They say you've got to fight to live, but there must be an easier way.**

They're always frightened in case they get a bad punch. Frightened to get hurt. You see so many boxers going punchy. You feel vexed for them inside. It's just the worry that there's always that one punch coming. Frightened.

**Then off we go, Johnny my lad and do what you must do,
And every time you take a punch son I'll be taking two,
It's strange to think that once I nursed you in my arms my dear,
For your nose is spread all over your face, and you're starting a cauliflower ear.**

Always when I go into a fight, I take note of the furniture and the ornaments and every night when I come home after the fight everything seems to be different, she must arrange everything in the house you know while I'm fighting. I know she's no' sitting..... She canna sit for a minute the night I'm boxing.

13

**You get to the hall and the place is crowded, then the butterflies start to play.
Try not to show that you're feeling nervous, this is where you earn your pay.
The first six-rounder's about to start, the announcer's voice begins to boom.
Four mair bouts and you'll be oot there, time you was in your dressing room.**

ANNOUNCEMENT

Oh it's full, it's been a sell-out for weeks.

**Off with your coat and off with your suit - in houndstooth check, Italian style,
Off with your shirt and tie and handmade shoes, you'll no need them awhile.
On with your jockstrap, on with your shorts of satin in colours known to the fans,
On with the stomach guard, on with your adhesive tape strapped tight around your hands.**

Costs about nine bob in tape every time he fights.

Before a fight you sit in the dressing room, you think, what a fool I am, sitting waiting to go out

there. You keep thinking I'm going to get myself a good job, this is no use, you're all keyed up.

It's a bad part waiting to get into the ring, like you get aches and pains you've never had before, you know.

**Wonder how the other bloke's feeling, wonder if I'm in his class,
Got the butterflies, cannae stop yawning, it's murder waiting for time to pass,
Wished I'd never left the foundry, wished that I was there the day,
Wished I'd never put the gloves on, wished that I was miles away.**

You feel terrified, you know, you're sitting there waiting to go in the ring, and you're praying that the ring'll collapse, or something devastating'll happen to stop you going in to that ring.

Something just clicks inside you. This is what you've been waiting on.

Ah, I've got a seat but it's too far back.

**There's the bell, the crowd is cheering, end of bout and noo it's me,
The talk is over, the waiting ended, noo it's fight and earn your fee.
This is why you did your training, this is where the belt is won,
This is how you earn your wages, in there then and get begun.**

Now don't forget.. John boy. Do your stuff tonight.

The beauty of boxing is this. You go into boxing knowing you're going to get hurt.

It's the best type of job.. provided you're not in it.

This is it, I'm not turning back now.

When I go out into the hall and all the people are there like and there are fanfares are going and the lights and everything, I always think to myself, right I'm going to work. That's it. It's a job of work, I've got to do it, and that's what I'm getting paid for, here we go.

Crowd noise.

Once you're in the ring, that's it, no messing about, the quicker you get started the better off you are.

You're excited, you're nervous, you're trembling.

It's the only place that a man is strictly on his own, it's the loneliest place in the world, it's like you're in an empty room, you know, just, you and this other guy. And one of you's going to walk out victorious, you know.

GENTLEMEN PLEASE LADIES AND GENTLEMEN THIS IS THE MAIN EVENT OF THE EVENING

**My right the champion Johnny boy, at twelve stone seven pounds.
 On my left Young Hopeful, twelve stone five, they'll fight for fifteen rounds.
 They'll punch and maul each other but of course no harm is meant.
 It's all good clean fun and pays the managers twenty five per cent.**

You'll lick this feller, it's up to you son, and don't forget what this means. We'll have a party tonight. This means thousands of pounds, success, you'll be famous tomorrow morning. Get there, you've got to win this, you must, you've got to be the boss, and you'll win it if you're the boss fighter.

FIRST ROUND. *Bell.*

**Come on Johnny in and give him the punishment.
 Come on Johnny in and give him the right.
 Come on Johnny in and paste him and batter him,
 And bash him and smash him and belt him around the ring.
 Make it a beautiful fight.**

Go on John. Come on son. Lift hands boy, come on fist him boy, box box box box.

**If he's a fighter I've got to keep boxing him, if he's a boxer, I'll make it a fight.
 Got to see whether he favours his left hand or likes to come in with his right.**

Go on jab jab jab jab. Come on. Get your right hand going now, come on.

**Come on Johnny make it straight from the shoulder, boy,
 Come on Johnny in and give him the lot,
 Come on Johnny in and shake him and shatter him,
 And whack him and crack him and wallop him round the ring,
 Hit him with all that you've got.**

**Pace and relax now, watch him and find it now,
 Keep to the centre, here in the ring,
 Give him no rest, keep bobbing and weaving
 And throw every thing you can fling.**

I know he's going to lead the left hand, and he's going to follow through with a right cross. I know he is because he's been doing that.

A hard punch is a fair punch.

I know he's going to do it.

And it's quick - wheew, wheew - you can't see it.

Walk into him, make him throw it before he's ready, I'm not going to stand back and be a target for him. I've got to lean this way, I've got to lean out the way of that right hand.

Your mind is working sharp as anything, your eyes is working, you're thinking all the time. You see a right hand coming, you make turn your shoulder. If he hits your shoulder you've got to take account of that, you know.

We're, we're, it's a reflex.

But he ain't gonna let me counter, drops his right elbow, bangs the left hand first. So now what am I going to do?. He's thinking as fast as I am.

**With him Johnny boy, you've got him reeling, the fans are with you all the way.
They've come from far and near to see you do your stuff.
We've come to watch your skill, we want to be here with you at the kill.
So go on fighting Johnny boy and belt him in the kisser.**

**Now they're on the ropes, mixing it and jabbing,
Careful kid and watch his right
Be wary Johnny grab him
Careful Johnny take it easy
Watch out!**

**Come on kid and do some work. Punch him hard and make it hurt.
Let's see some blood that's why we've paid our money.
Hit him with your left and let us hear the thud of leather.
Let's see that old one two three Johnny left and right together
Feinting ducking jabbing Johnny.**

Bell.

There's the bell!

You've got to make this minute's rest feel like a fifteen minutes rest. Get the boy again out there. So you cannae afford to lose one second. Getting that stool in there and the boy down on it, you've only got a minute to replace the oxygen that's lost, revival and everything else, he's got to go out there bone dry, spick and span, his gums in proper shape and his breathing normal. In the short space of a minute.

SECONDS OUT. ROUND TWO.

Go on Billy you've got nothing to lose. Brian, come on Brian. go on bri go on Billy hit him oh blimey get away from him, get him off the ropes

Up on your feet now, clip him whip him cut him,
belt him Johnny, belt him Johnny.

Into the fray and batter away son,
belt him Johnny, belt him Johnny,

Punchball sounds.

He's down on the ropes now, nail him flail him whale him,
down him Johnny, down him Johnny,

One to the heart, tear him apart,
down him Johnny, down him Johnny.

Work on his eye lad, tan him wham him slam him
hurt him, Johnny, hurt him Johnny,

Give him some more, he'll be on the floor,
hurt him Johnny, hurt him Johnny.

Go on Billy, inside Billy.

I've got to put him down.

Right handers. Come on Billy boy, give it to him.

He's got to go down.

Let's do it to him, that's the type.

Right handers, right handers, right handers.

Come on Johnny Boy, we know you can murder him,
Come on Johnny hit him as hard as you can,
Come on Johnny you must bash him and slaughter him
And whang him and bang him and beat him insensible.
Johnny he's only a man.

It's a continuation of the old Roman gladiator stuff. Still the same sport only modified.

Do one for the ribs and one for the kidneys,
That must have hurt him, that made him flinch,
Got to keep with him and watch for an opening,
Damn it we're stuck in a clinch.

BREAK!

Don't rest...

A little breather then they're off again,
Swapping punches, taking punishment,
The swollen lips, the angry bruises,
 It's a lovely fight.
See where the blood shows each time the glove lands.
Three minutes heavy punching both the hands two-fisted fighting
 Hard slogging. Gloves thudding. Eyes bleeding.
 He's down!!

Just stay. Just stay there for another couple of seconds. Take some time.

I heard the referee saying six seven eight. I thought well I'm going to get a right drubbing if I get up. But I get up.

He's up and he's attacking,
 punching away,
Now he's getting cracking,
 punching away.
Johnny he's back-tracking,
 punching away,
Taking a whacking,
 punching away.

SECONDS OUT. ROUND FOUR.

BELL.

Punchball sounds.

Johnny's getting narked now,
 punching away,
Think he's getting narked now,
 punching away,
And his eye is bleeding,
 punching away,
And the other bloke's leading,
 punching away.

Both of them are slow now,
 punching away,
Swapping blow for blow now,
 punching away,
It's a fine blood-letting,
 punching away,
And it's even betting,

punching away.

That's a beauty.

Come on, box on.

There's another beaut, look he's standing him up now. Can't miss him.

When you take a good hiding, on the receiving end, you're on the sticky end, you think, what's all this for? There's all these people that have never had a glove on, they're laughing and shouting at you. You're there to entertain them.

It's like in the olden days, when they threw the Christians to the lions.

It's, it's so much ingrained with tradition, man against man.

**Come on Johnny boy you know you can flatten him,
Come on Johnny you can put him to sleep.
Come on Johnny fling a couple of hooks at him,
Rout him and clout him and throw him an uppercut.
Johnny he's out on his feet.**

**I'm taking a tanning, earning my living, out on his feet, I am as well,
Blood in my eyes, I've got to keep on my feet, until the sound of the bell.**

PUNCHES AND CROWD ROARING.

It's a job of work. I'm doing me job.

ABOVE CROWD'S ROAR. Come on Johnny, box, box.

15

**What do we do with the man in the ring?
What do we do with the man in the ring?
What do we do? says Jack me lad.
What do we do? says everyone.**

**We'll pay him to fight says Billy the Bob.
And we'll flatten his nose says Billy the Bob.
And punish his body says Jack me Lad.
And cheer when he's hurt says everyone.**

**What shall we do with the bull in the ring?
What shall we do with the bull in the ring?
What'll we do? says Jack me Lad.**

What'll we do? says everyone.

Stick darts in his back says Billy the Bob.
And set 'em alight says Billy the Bob.
Put a sword in his belly says Jack me Lad.
And finish him off says everyone.

What'll we do with the man in the lion's den?
What'll we do wi'im? says Billy the Bob.
What'll we do wi'im? says Jack me Lad.
What'll we do wi'im? says everyone?

We'll spit in his face says Billy the Bob.
As he's torn apart says Billy the Bob.
And bless the cage says Jack me Lad.
And watch him die! says everyone.

Oh! Look at that! It's over mate. It's over. It's all over.

Bloody ridiculous to match 'em, mate, no match for him like. No match.

Don't worry John, don't worry John

BOOING.

16

Johnny, Johnny, you failed us Johnny.
Johnny, Johnny, down on the floor.
Johnny, Johnny, out for the count of ten.
Johnny, a champion no more.

I know Johnny, he's a great kid to know. But other than that...

When you came in you looked like a hero
There in the ring with your silk dressing gown.
We cheered you we wooed you, you failed us, we booed you.
Johnny, you let us down.

That is the fight crowd. They like you while you're winning. But as soon as you're licked, they like the feller that licked you.

The loser creeps out to lick his wounds, while the victor preens himself on the adulation of the mob.

It's all in the game isn't it?

**It's a rough game a tough game needing guts and skill,
And you'll never make a boxer if you haven't got the will.**

I'd never knock boxing. Boxing has been good to me. I've seen the world, I've travelled all over the world, where I wouldn't have if I hadn't have done boxing. I mean I come from a working class family, I would have been a plasterer earning 14, 15 pound a week How could I afford to travel all over the world, been to the places I've seen. Well I've had a good life.

I don't think nothing wrong with boxing. I think it helped me because I would have ended up in jail or something you know. I think it did a lot for me.

Boxers are entertainers. It's like the stage, you hate to leave the limelight, the glory, you get used to the crowd and the roar of the crowd, you don't want to be forgotten, you know, and boxing has a... a magic.

Did you see 'em with a pint of beer in th' hands, the, the atmosphere, did you hear the applause and the roar and the interest of the crowd. Watching a men's sport, and a real British thing, full of vim and full of vitality. That is what fighting is. It's life. Men.

You're alone, on your own, when you're up there in the ring and wading in.

Uh huh, it'll go on and on for years. That's just how the nation's living.

NATIONAL ANTHEM.

17

I don't think you can call professional boxing a sport. It's, it's more of a spectacle you know, like... cockfighting. I mean there's no other sport where... football, if a man's injured, he's immediately taken from the field, and he's treated. The object is not to injure anybody, it's to achieve an aim, one term or one person against another. When there's an injury it's a catastrophe. In boxing when there's an injury it's good, it's very good. You can always cut his eye, you can work on that, it'll be just the job, you know, we'll be able to stop him and things like that you know. He's knocked him out! Lovely,, he won't get up after ten, it's a terrific knockout , but that man may never get up again, you know. It's brutal and callous. It's going back to Roman times, I suppose really. With the gladiators and things like that. And yet I'm going into it. It sounds mad in a way that...

**The battle is done with, the fighters departed,
Leaving the litter and the spoils of the crowd -
The empty beer bottles, the torn silver paper,
The spent cigarette smoke that hangs like a shroud.**

**The champions have gone and the black squad takes over,
The ring is dismantled, the ropes lose the strain,
The cleaners are sponging the blood off the canvas,
The blood of the heroes is swilled down the drain.**

The bars are deserted, the dressing rooms empty,
Stale with the smell of a thousand defeats.
The pain and the glory are already fading.
What's left is the thrill when you count the receipts.

The Fight Game was the work of Ewan MacColl, Peggy Seeger and Charles Parker.