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Packey McFarland



Born: Nov. 1, 1888
Died: Sept. 23, 1936
Bouts: 104
Won: 64
Lost: 1
Drew: 5
ND: 34
KOs: 47
Induction: 1992

One of several excellent World War I-era fighters who never won titles, Packey McFarland held his own with the very best. Not a brawler by nature, McFarland gained experience fighting in the Chicago stockyards. When he knocked out a fellow employee in a lunch-hour match, McFarland decided to adopt boxing as his vocation. Turning pro at the age of sixteen, McFarland initially fought on handball courts in the Irish neighborhoods of Chicago.

Because the crowds demanded it, McFarland employed a fine knock-out punch in his early encounters. Later, as his career developed, McFarland became better known for his boxing skill. In fact, he expressed a distinct lack of interest in knocking out opponents, preferring to win by decision. Going east for the first time, McFarland decided highly touted Bert Keyes in Boston in 1908. He then won a decision over Freddie Welsh before fighting him to a 25-round draw in a rematch in Los Angeles. A third bout with Welsh in London also resulted in a draw.

Though McFarland was highly regarded, he was never given a shot at the lightweight title held by Battling Nelson. In 1908, the two nearly came to blows outside the Hotel Astoria in New York. In fairness to Nelson, McFarland usually fought above the lightweight limit, which was then 133 pounds.

McFarland fought Jack Britton three times. The first bout, held in Memphis, was called a draw, although Chicago newspapers declared Britton the winner. In two no-decision rematches, Britton and McFarland fought very evenly. McFarland closed his career by fighting in a much ballyhooed contest with the clever Hall of Famer Mike Gibbons, but the ten-round fight was a flop with neither fighter landing any significant punches.

In retirement, McFarland managed his sizable investments, was director of two banks, and also served on the Illinois State Athletic Commission.

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