

The prize fight

We, or I and some others, the wimps of the school, suffered bullies for the first couple of years at high school and there was nothing one could do about it, just occasionally something would occur to even up the balance. At least it did once. Dennis was a not in my estimate a particularly appealing character, loud and boastful as I remember him. An appalling complexion and a none too pleasant nature. None of which seemed to effect the high regard he had for himself. Not shared by most of us, though to be fair if we had run a least popular person contest he might have got a place but certainly not a Gold medal. If he had not amounted to anything it would have exceeded my expectations of him. In the complex web of these relation ships, the class bullies hung about with him, as he was one of the tough guys. He was a bit too well built to be a bully. He was not particularly tall but did have a good athletic build. This was all that stopped him from being one of the bullies. It wouldn't look right for him to beat up on the little guys so he just made do with the fear and admiration of the class bullies. He couldn't really touch us because of this but nobody wanted to push the issue. One of the others would sort you out anyway if you did. All of this left the boy with a problem, tough guy with no one to be tough with. Pick a fight with another guy of his size and one could get really hurt as all the soft targets were too small. This left him as the only one in the tough guy group that hadn't pushed anybody about. They, his group wouldn't tell him that, but he was beginning to realise this was a problem. Lack of street credibility; not a concept that was understood then but that was what it was. There were few choices, there was a German kid in another class but he had shown he tough and didn't know how to quit, so he wasn't a consideration. There was a pommy kid of impressive physique in our class so he wasn't considered either. There was also Ian, another pommy kid who was very tall, rather gangly and didn't seem to be too well coordinated. He was goofy looking, shambly in gait and sounded so 'English'. He also had a hyphenated name. Perfect at least for Dennis.

All that was needed was a fight, Dennis's endeavours to achieve this was frustrated by Ian's rather serene approach to things. Dennis needled and chipped away hoping to provoke a reaction. He needed a fight but couldn't have his mates drag Ian up there just to beat him up. Weeks of prodding and poking by Dennis eventually had an effect and by some mysterious means a goodly portion of the schools ended up by the monkey bars in a large circle. This being the area where fights were. Ian sort of arrived on his own, while Dennis had his little crowd of admirers or sycophants (pick one) who pretended interest while he told them all how he was going to sort the pommy kid out. Major fights at school usually

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attracted a large crowd, who formed a large circle, which ensured most of us could see and it acted as a screen to the teachers.

Ian struck up a boxing sort of pose, which looked a bit defensive and also a bit ineffective but then again he was never going to look much anyway. Dennis confidently flexed his muscles, made fists, posed for the crowd and then moved swiftly but stylishly towards the waiting victim. This was going to be unfortunate for some one. Dennis had not gotten close before Ian threw the first punch. That was interesting, as Ian's arm seemed to just get longer as he straightened it all out and the procedure was only halted by Dennis's nose. Stopped him briefly but he shrugged off the effect of a lucky punch and waded in again. For the same result. After several more of these Dennis realised that Ian had arms 2 foot longer than his and that Ian could also box. The next couple of forays were a bit smarter as Dennis managed to frequently block the punch but discovered that Ian could do the same left handed as well as right. Fast attacks resulted in Ian back pedaling slowly and punching quickly at the same time and after several whacks in the nose Dennis would have to stop and back off out of range. Ian didn't really want to fight anyway and so never pursued him when he did. All that Dennis was going to manage was to block some of the punches, he did manage to get through Ian's defences once, he grabbed him and tried to knee him in the groin. The crowd wasn't having any of that and the angry mutter from the crowd let Dennis know that he would get sorted out properly if that sort of thing was going to happen. Ian broke the hold and things went back to the way they were. The fight continued with Dennis occasionally landing an ineffectual punch and Ian pounding Dennis in the nose, which began to bleed. Finally Dennis managed to sort of stop fighting without actually conceding anything and act as if he had demonstrated something and escape. He went away with his little crowd of supporters, telling them all how he wanted to wrestle and the other guy wouldn't. He may have convinced them he was the victim of underhand behaviour. Ian wandered off on his own as he usually did. Most of us wanted to celebrate his victory but the prospect of unnecessarily incurring the displeasure of Dennis's mates put a dampener on that. My memory of Dennis is not of a tough guy, but as someone who managed against all odds to get himself beaten up. Couldn't have been more deserved really.