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Book Publishers & Distributors

Early praise for STRONG BOY: The Life and Times of John L. Sullivan, America's First Sports Hero

“Klein offers this treasure trove of information that covers sports, celebrity, crime, politics and entertainment as he tracks John L. Sullivan, the ‘Boston Strong Boy,’ across the country and globe as he rises from the tenement to the heavyweight championship and everything that came with it. Boxing fans will delight in the detailed accounts of Sullivan’s battles with Paddy Ryan, Charley Mitchell, Jake Kilrain, and Jim Corbett, while others might find more interest in Sullivan drunken exploits. . . . Also of interest is how Klein, using his expressive-yet-scholarly prose (“A boxer always represents power in its most visceral sense, and John L. symbolized an ascendant America that was flexing its economic muscles”), ties Sullivan to the issues of the era, such as temperance, class and race relations, immigration, and America's growth into a world power. [E]ven though this may not be the first book about Sullivan, it just may be the most exhaustive.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“Klein delivers a well-researched, enjoyable biography of boxing’s first heavyweight superstar, John L. Sullivan. . . . Attentive as he is to historical details, Klein’s storytelling gift is most evident in how he depicts ‘John L.’ as a beloved hero who was eventually undone by ego and who had a legendary appetite for food and drink. Though largely forgotten, Sullivan was the great ‘American Hercules’ who ruled the late-19th-century boxing world and helped usher it into the modern sporting age. A lively, consistently entertaining sports biography.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

“John L. Sullivan was perhaps the first real American sports superstar, and especially because he meant so much as a minority champion, he prefigured Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, Billie Jean King and the many other athletes who became genuine heroes to the people they represented. He is as important a cultural figure as he was a sports idol.”
—Frank Deford

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STRONG BOY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF AMERICA'S FIRST SPORTS HERO

—*The story of John L. Sullivan, America's first national sports superstar and the forefather of boxing*—

“I can lick any son-of-a-bitch in the world.” So boasted John L. Sullivan, the first modern heavyweight boxing champion of the world, a man who was the gold standard of American sport for more than a decade, and the first athlete to earn more than a million dollars. He had a big ego, big mouth, and bigger appetites. His womanizing, drunken escapades, and chronic police-blotter presence were godsend to a burgeoning newspaper industry. The larger-than-life boxer embodied the American Dream for late nineteenth-century immigrants as he rose from Boston’s Irish working class to become the most recognizable man in the nation. In the process, the “Boston Strong Boy” transformed boxing from outlawed bare-knuckle fighting into the gloved spectacle we know today.

Lyons Press, an imprint of Globe Pequot Press, is proud to announce the November 5, 2013, release of **STRONG BOY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN L. SULLIVAN, AMERICA'S FIRST SPORTS HERO**, by Christopher Klein (978-0-7627-8152-2; \$26.95 hc), the story of John L. Sullivan, America’s first sports superstar—a self-made man who personified the power and excesses of the Gilded Age.

Everywhere John L. Sullivan went, his fists backed up his bravado. Sullivan’s epic brawls—including his 75-round bout against Jake Kilrain, and his cross-country barnstorming tour in which he literally

— over —



challenged all of America to a fight—are recounted in vivid detail, as are his battles outside the ring with a troubled marriage, wild weight and fitness fluctuations, and raging alcoholism. **STRONG BOY** gives readers ringside seats to the colorful tale of one of the country’s first Irish-American heroes and the birth of the American sports media and the country’s celebrity obsession with athletes:

- Learn how Sullivan’s incredible career and oversized personality launched America’s sporting obsession
- Travel back in time to the extravagant Gilded Age to witness the birth of our celebrity culture
- Discover how Sullivan’s power and self-confidence transformed him into an idol for a generation of Irish-Americans emasculated in the wake of the horrific potato famine that gripped their homeland
- Explore how Sullivan revolutionized boxing from outlawed bare-knuckle fighting into the gloved spectacle we know today

Christopher Klein is a history and travel writer and the author of two previous books, including *The Die-Hard Sports Fan’s Guide to Boston*, which the *Boston Globe* called “a handy primer for the sports-bewildered.” A frequent contributor to *The Boston Globe* and History.com, he has also written for *The New York Times*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Harvard Magazine*, *Red Sox Magazine*, ESPN.com, Smithsonian.com, and AmericanHeritage.com. He lives in Massachusetts. Visit him at christopherklein.com.

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