

Ron Historyo's
Time Travel
to the

Wrestlers of the
Golden Age

Tom Rose



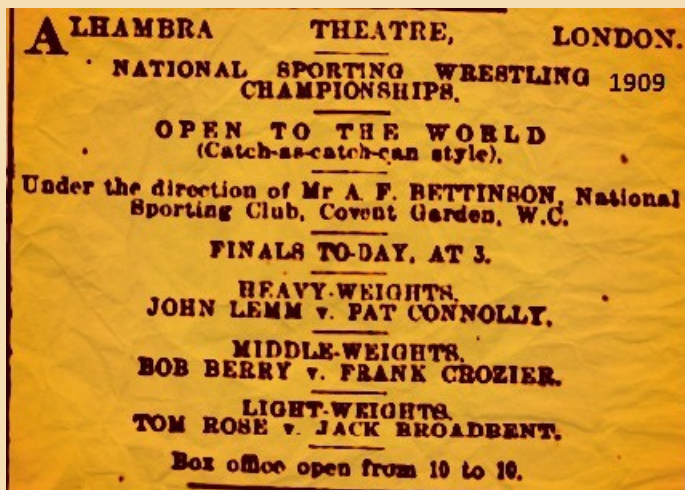
The first ten years of the Twentieth century saw some changes, like the introduction of Joe Smith Belts and The Alhambra as a venue in 1904.

After 1904 and Hackenschmidt and Madrasi's first fight wrestling lost some popularity. By 1908 the interest in Greco Roman Wrestling had died and Tournaments were for catch wrestlers only. This new age of wrestling was to be run with a governing body.

Unlike the 1904 Alhambra event run by Antonio Pierri for mixed styles of wrestling, the Alhambra was used again in 1908, 1909 and 1910 and these Tournaments were run by Arthur Bettinson and William Bankier the former Strongman Apollo.

If you are good at a sport during your lifetime there is usually an event that is the Pinnacle of your career. I am going to make a choice that for Tom Rose it was winning the Alhambra Tournament in 1909. His weight was Lightweight. Effectively this made Tom Rose World Champion and the first holder of a Lonsdale belt that was introduced to wrestling in 1909.

In the semi finals Tom Rose beat Willie Charnock, a man who went on to train many wrestlers in the newer age that was to come.



Jack Broadbent of Accrington was to be the other finalist. They fought for one and a half hours with no score, then another half hour and no score. Twenty one more minutes and Rose got the fall.

The occasion was stamped with a particular memory that Tom Rose's dad, on victory, ran onto the stage and hugged his boy. He addressed the audience and put them right that this was his son. He threw his cap high in the air to loud cheers. The press reported that the speech was delivered

in a thick Yorkshire accent which would be incorrect as it would have been a Lancashire one. Something I will explain later.

Winning this tournament was a guarantee that much work could be found in the Music halls all over the country.

Of course Tom Rose had not come from nowhere to be champion. In the previous year he had appeared in another London tournament, beating another Accrington lightweight in the semi final, Jack Bentley. Again the supremo of the show was William Bankier who did so much to build wrestling round the country at a second attempt in the 1930's.

In the final Rose took on J.W.Price of Burnley. Over approximately forty minutes Rose won 2-0.

Later that year Rose and John Willie Price met at Burnley and due to fog fought on and off for three days by lamp light before the match had to be abandoned. It was a real Pea Souper.

These championships had been a five year journey for Tom Rose; he had started wrestling competitively in 1903 when he was eighteen.

But what of Tom Rose, where was he from?

There are several towns that lay claim to him. He was advertised from Wigan, Barnsley and Bolton. What was the truth in all this?

Well if we go back to March, 1885, his dad, John Rose was only 19 and had married Alice Needham at St Catherine Wigan. 16th September 1885 Tom Rose was born in Wigan, the eldest child of the family that was to have at least eight children. There was only twenty years age difference with dad.

I found the family in 1891 at 52 Lower Morrison Street in Wigan. Dad had been born Wigan, as had mum. John Rose was a Coal Miner. About 1896 the family had moved to Bolton, no doubt a work opportunity for dad at some other colliery, and at 15 years old Tom

was also working at the colliery as a Dataller. This was a sort of pay as you go odd job man, perhaps repairing roads or similar tasks.

NEW HIPPODROME, PORTER-ST., HULL.
MONDAY, May 17th, and During the Week 1909
HULL'S POPULAR MUSIC HALL. TWICE NIGHTLY,
at 7 and 9.
T O M R O S E,
CHAMPION LIGHT-WEIGHT WRESTLER OF THE
WORLD.
£10 to any Light-weight he fails to defeat in 20 minutes,
and £25 to any Light-weight who defeats him in 20
minutes.
J. P. CARROL, NEUMANN and BROWNE, ROSE MAY,
A. G. SPRY.
GREAT WRESTLING TOURNAMENT.
TWO CHAMPIONSHIP CUPS DURING THE WEEK:—
10st 4lb (2lb allowed for costume) Championship of
the North of England (open); 9st 8lb (2lb allowed
for costume) Championship of the North of England
(open). Gold Medals for the Runners-up. (For full
details, see bills.)
BOWER and DENVILLE, ROSE E. ROVANA and Com-
pany of Comedians, The BIOSCOPE, and CATTANEO
COMPANY, Acrobatic Sketch.
POPULAR PRICES.
Box Office open from 10 to 2; Saturdays, 10 to 1.

Now here is the thing, during Tom's peak years he lived in Barnsley. He had come in 1906 with the family to work in the Barnsley Main and the Barnsley Barrow Collieries.

It's hard to understand why a job in the mines in Yorkshire? Should one assume pay better than in Lancashire?

From a wrestling point of view, whilst in Barnsley Tom's manager was Arthur Pitts of the Market Hotel.

In 1909 Tom had got married in Barnsley to Mary Ann Aldred, a Bolton Girl. With

his wife Tom had gone back to Bolton by 1911 and they had a beer selling business. Tom's sister, Catherine, worked in the shop for them. Must have been quite big because it took up numbers 174-178 Lever Street. Dad John Rose and Family stayed on in Barnsley.

Tom was to have several fights at Barnsley Football ground over the years and I suspect eventually had a hand in promoting them there and at Atherton FC and Springfield Park Wigan, aided and abetted by his friend Job Shambley. In December 1908 at Barnsley one fight did not go his way. He took on Peter Gotz. And had to submit to a painful leg scissors round the waist. He was unable to continue and such was the agreements in those days the match was bought as a draw by Rose by giving Gotz £15.

Rose and Shambley put their own match on at Barnsley in August 1909 but after all their time in the Music Halls I am not so sure that a win for Rose was just an exhibition on the basis that after one hour Shambley had failed to throw him. Yes I think entertainment wrestling had crept in by this time.

I also believe that Rose was making good money from the game, and here is an example of the town of Bolton Claiming this man, who was from Wigan, as their own.

Look at the schedule Tom Rose was keeping. That same month he had work at Hull. Wherever he went in 1909 he could call himself World Champion. Being good at something was a gift, there was no end to how one could earn money, the key to it was to be a good guy with a good image. A man loved by the fans.

The year 1913 suggests that Tom had made a small fortune with his talent, but as for being unbeaten, well one thing was overlooked. Back at the Alhambra in 1910 Tom was defending his championship and in the semi final beat Olson of Newfoundland on a disqualification. He was to have another match with Olson at Ince Recreation Grounds in May, but it seems to me that it was another entertainment match where the object was to

throw Rose twice in an hour. Rose of course won. In the final at the Alhambra Tom Rose lost to Peter Gotz.

He did go public and you can see his reasoning for claiming to still be lightweight champion of the world. His argument was that Gotz was a middleweight who had brought his body weight down by artificial means for the weigh in at the start of the two week tournament. Rose had a constant body weight. At the time of the final Gotz was considerably heavier and stronger and Rose was unable to compete. It was a loophole that Rose thought should be amended.

Whatever, it was to be the last year at the Alhambra and another decline in Wrestling was coming.

Some wrestling still went on and for example Tom Rose fought Miles Sweeney at Atherton in the summer of 1913. As late as 1919 at Wigan, Springfield Park, Rose fought Joe Daley of Standish said to be for the welter weight championship of Europe. Well into his forties, this was defeat.

By anyone's standards Rose had had a great career and made some good money.

Well done that man.

This was not the end of Tom Rose though as a sportsman. The Talbot handicap I believe to be the oldest bowling competition. He won it in 1924. He also competed in the famous Waterloo Competition in 1926 and 1929 and maybe more.

Tom and his wife were not to be of Bolton much longer and by 1929 they had actually moved to Blackpool. As the second world war broke out Tom was a Turf Accountant living at Buchanan Street in Blackpool, situated North of the Tower and inland from the Sea Front.

If I have done my research correct Tom Rose died at the end of 1973 age 88 in Blackpool. He seems to have had a good life, a sportsman through and through.

A man of four towns who actually who spent the last half of his life in Blackpool. He certainly made sure he did not stay working in the mines, something a certain Adrian Street was also determined to do in the 1950's.

Many thanks for advice from Ruslan Pashayev a researcher in the USA who has made me aware of the importance of the Alhambra tournaments and the championship belts of the times.

Hope you enjoyed Tom Rose.

Historyo