

# Dan Parker

"The most consistently brilliant of all sportswriters....A great humorist...A master of satire."

- Damon Runyon

Born Daniel Francis Parker in Waterbury on July 1, 1893, he was one of the foremost sportswriters of his time, documenting America's growing love affair with sports.

Upon graduating from Crosby High School, his illustrious career began with the *Waterbury American* newspaper. After serving in World War I, he returned to the paper, became city editor and then sports editor. He authored the popular "Ben Franklin Says" column, a humorous potpourri of poetry, prose, criticism and political satire with a local emphasis.

In 1924, New York and the fledgling *Daily Mirror* beckoned. He remained there until the demise of that storied tabloid in 1963. He covered the New York Yankees of Ruth and Gehrig, later became sports editor and finally achieved columnist status with the admired weekly feature, "Broadway Bugle." Respected columns that followed were, "His Side of Sports", "Around the Clock With..." and "Short Sport Chats." He also wrote for many periodicals, including a monthly piece for *Sport Magazine*. His book, *The ABC's of Horseracing*, is well-respected in the field.

An imposing, charismatic figure, he stood 6'4" and weighed 240 pounds. He was an indefatigable crusader against the corruption that threatened his beloved domain. *Newsweek* reported, "Despite mob threats, Dan Parker fought against corruption in wrestling, boxing and horseracing, refusing payoffs or favors." *The New York Times* said his exposure of the link between the underworld and boxing led to many criminal convictions. He was called "the cop on the national sports beat" by journalist W.C. Heinz and the "Scourge of the scamps and flayer of the phonies" by *Newsweek*. The *Waterbury Republican* said he was always "on the side of the paying spectators, the champion of sports fans."

Parker was praised by critics as a master dialectician and wit. He once quoted a disgruntled fight manager as having said, "I should'a stood in bed" and another time described a boxer who was knocked down repeatedly as "the Horizontal Heavyweight."

Parker was a promoter of racial equality in sports and was an early supporter of Joe Louis. When Jackie Robinson "broke the color barrier" in Major League Baseball he said, "a powerful blow was struck



against the color line in sports."

He received the Connecticut Sportswriters Gold Key in 1945, the National Headliners Award in 1949 and the prestigious George Polk Memorial Award for his boxing exposé. Parker was inducted into the National Association of Sports Scribes Hall of Fame and was honored by his hometown in 1958 when a local street was renamed Dan Parker Drive.

After the *Daily Mirror* ceased publication, his syndicated column was featured in the *New York Journal American*. He retired in 1964, returning soon thereafter to reside in his native city until his death on May 20, 1967. He had numbered among his friends such legendary figures as Walter Winchell, William Randolph Hearst and Damon Runyon. His funeral was attended by luminaries from near and far and he was eulogized in the *Waterbury Republican* as "one of the nation's best-loved sportswriters."