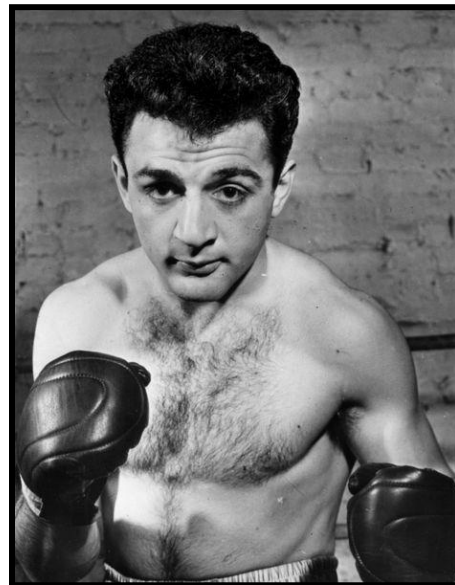


Martinez & The \$20,000 Fix That Failed

On Oct. 29th Vince Martinez knocked out Carmine Fiore at Madison Square Garden. Four thousand fans were at ringside, millions saw the fight on television, but none was aware of the dirty drama that served as a prologue. SI tells this story for the first time and demands again: boxing's dirty business must be cleaned up now

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED - Originally Posted: November 22, 1954

Vince Martinez is an up-and-coming welterweight of 25 whose biggest winning purse so far has been \$27,000. Three weeks ago he was offered \$20,000 to lose. SI here tells the story—the latest chapter in the story of boxing's dirty business—for the first time.



The story begins on Wednesday, Oct. 27 when Vince Martinez finished his morning roadwork in Paterson, N.J. He was training for a Madison Square Garden fight, two nights later, with Carmine Fiore. At lunchtime Martinez drove to his nearby home. As he parked his car a voice called, "Hey, Vince!"

Martinez turned and saw two men lolling on the sidewalk a short distance away. They beckoned and Martinez walked over.

Without any preparation one of the men made the pitch. "How would you like to make a fast \$20,000? All you have to do is lay down for Fiore."

Vince has what his older brother Phil calls "pride." "He's not cocky," says Phil, "but he knows he's a fighter and he knows he's good." Vince had beaten Fiore in 1953, and had a record of 38 wins, 3 defeats. He was eligible for a match with the welterweight titleholder, Johnny Saxton (SI, Nov. 1). Saxton's crown is worth roughly \$150,000 to the wearer.

Martinez gave them a short answer. "Are you guys crazy? I'm in line for a title fight and you want me to lay down for this guy?"

"Think it over carefully, Vince," he was advised. "And don't do anything that might get you hurt." The conversation ended on this threat of violence. The men walked round the corner and drove off in a car.

That evening a worried Martinez, keeping the offer to himself, went back to the gym for a sparring session. He performed like a sloppy novice, missing openings, getting hit easily and often. It was apparent that Vince was not himself.

On Thursday Vince confided in his brother Phil. And Brother Phil gave him the right advice. They called the New York State Athletic Commission, under whose jurisdiction the fight was being held. The commission at once arranged a meeting in Manhattan with District Attorney Frank Hogan's office for that evening.

Vince told his story and the D.A.'s staff went to work. When the Martinez group left Hogan's office they were under a heavy but almost unobtrusive guard which stuck to them wherever they went.

Meanwhile the odds on the fight shifted peculiarly. On Wednesday Vince was a 13-to-5 favorite. By Thursday night, when presumably the bets were down, the figures sagged to 9-to-5. But by fight time the odds were again 13-to-5. It is conceivable that somebody had spotted the Martinez bodyguard.

It is the custom at Madison Square Garden to play The Star-Spangled Banner before the main event. The house lights dim; the fighters stand motionless by their corners. There was a slight change for the Martinez-Fiore fight. Instead of just being dimmed, the Garden lapsed into near-total darkness. Around Martinez, unseen in the gloom, stood the D.A.'s bodyguard.

The fight was all Martinez although he relied mainly on a jab, cautiously keeping his right high to protect against Fiore's wild left swings. Vince knew he could not afford to lose this fight; if he did and news of the attempted fix got around he would be accused of taking a dive. Fiore was doing his best to beat him.

By the seventh round Fiore was through. Vince waded in and hammered him helpless on the ropes. Referee Harry Kessler stopped the fight.

Afterward, the Martinez party was escorted to the New Jersey line.

Obviously, the story is not ended yet. District Attorney Hogan and his men are hunting for the gamblers who wanted a sure thing. Clues in the long story of the gambler-ridden fight racket are scant.

And Vince Martinez? He is looking for a crack at the title. As Phil Martinez says, "When you're clean, you got nothin' to be afraid of."

THE BOXING GUILD & THE \$100 RECEIPTS

While District Attorney Frank Hogan sought the two men who attempted to bribe Vince Martinez, another boxing investigation got under way last week in New York City. Parading before the State Athletic Commission headed by Robert K. Christenberry were managers, promoters and match-makers who hurled charges and countercharges at each other with a ferocity that would have been enviable in their fighters.

Up for scrutiny were the activities of the New York local of the International Boxing Guild, an organization of managers. Members of the Metropolitan Boxing Alliance, an insurgent group, had filed 13 affidavits with the commission accusing the Guild of blacklisting, discrimination, coercion, extortion and of levying a \$100 tribute on both members and nonmembers for every televised fight in which one of their fighters appeared. Holding what purport to be canceled checks and receipts for the \$100 payments (see below), M.B.A. members told the commission that anybody who failed to pony up the \$100 was "grounded," unable to get a fight for his boy. Said M.B.A. Lawyer H. Jordan Lee: "We feel the Guild is such a corrupt, vicious organization that to permit its practices to continue must result in the death of boxing."

Guild men freely admitted collecting the \$100 but insisted the money was proffered voluntarily to the Guild for its efforts to raise purses. The Guild stuck to its guns despite evidence which showed that the "voluntary" contributions in many cases were taken off the top of a fighter's purse by a checkoff.

I.B.G. President Charlie Johnston countered, "We don't know what's in their affidavits but what's in it must be lies. They can't prove anything because we don't do anything.... They're just looking for power. Just like radicals."

More confusion was thrown in the cloudy waters when Cus D'Amato, Guild collector of the \$100 payments, took the stand. After admitting that he did not know what became of the money after he turned it in, D'Amato ingenuously parried a question on his official Guild position by saying he was "not sure until I am certain what the commission is trying to get at."

THESE ARE THE M.B.A. RECEIPTS:



Receipts for \$100 payments will be offered in evidence by Metropolitan Boxing Alliance. Receipt at top left belongs to M.B.A. president Al Braverman, who said, "I don't mind if those fellows care to eat a whole loaf of bread. However, even sparrows are entitled to crumbs." Under Braverman's receipt is one held by Sam Golden, former part manager of Hurricane Jackson.

THESE ARE THE PRINCIPALS:

1. **ANGELO (Squeeza da Banana) PUCCI**, assistant match-maker at St. Nicholas Arena, denied black list of managers existed.
2. **RAY ARCEL**, TV boxing promoter, admitted paying \$13,000 for advertising in limited-circulation magazine published by the Guild.
3. **CUS D'AMATO**, Guild collector, drew laughs with his vague answers to questions.
4. **BILLY BROWN**, Madison Square Garden match-maker, took oath, swore Garden never used check-off system to collect \$100.

5. **CHARLIE JOHNSTON** (left), International Boxing Guild president, Bill Daly (center), treasurer of I.B.G. and manager-of-record of Vince Martinez, conferred with their lawyer, Murray Frank. Daly is embroiled in hassle with Martinez family, who claim Daly has impeded Vince's battle for a shot at welterweight title. Daly's contract with Martinez runs out early next year, will not be renewed.

COMMISSIONERS:

ROBERT K. CHRISTENBERRY (left), commission head, confers with Commission Counsel Manuel Robbins (right) while Commissioner Leon F. Swears listens. Not in picture but seated at Christenberry's right is Commissioner Clilan B. Powell.

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