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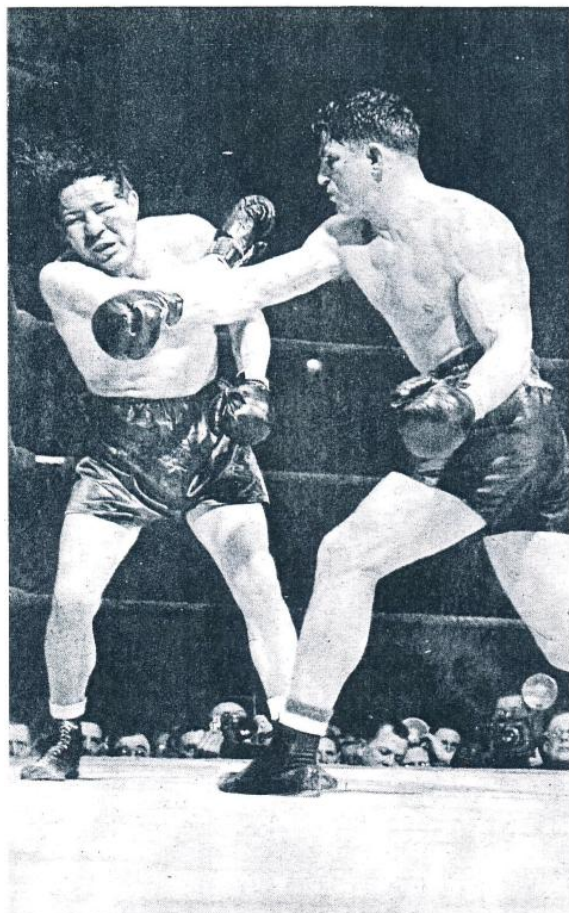
Submitted by JJ Johnston



The former dispenser of the "cosmic punch" has followed such heavyweight immortals as John L. Sullivan and Gentleman Jim Corbett from the squared circle to the footlights.

By Herb Goren

Lou Nova's New Career



PLAYING THE ROLE of Big Julie in the Broadway company of "Guys and Dolls," Lou Nova ducked out of the stage entrance of the New York City Center one day last summer and was mobbed by a swarm of autograph hounds.

"Mr. Nova, Mr. Nova," hollered one bobby-soxer. "Were you as good a fighter as you are an actor?"

The big guy, whose handsome, rugged features are matched only by his ability to speak his mind, affixed his scrawl to the autograph book and said:

"Honey, I know I was the second best boxer in the world. I'm not sure that I'll ever be the second best thespian the world has ever known."

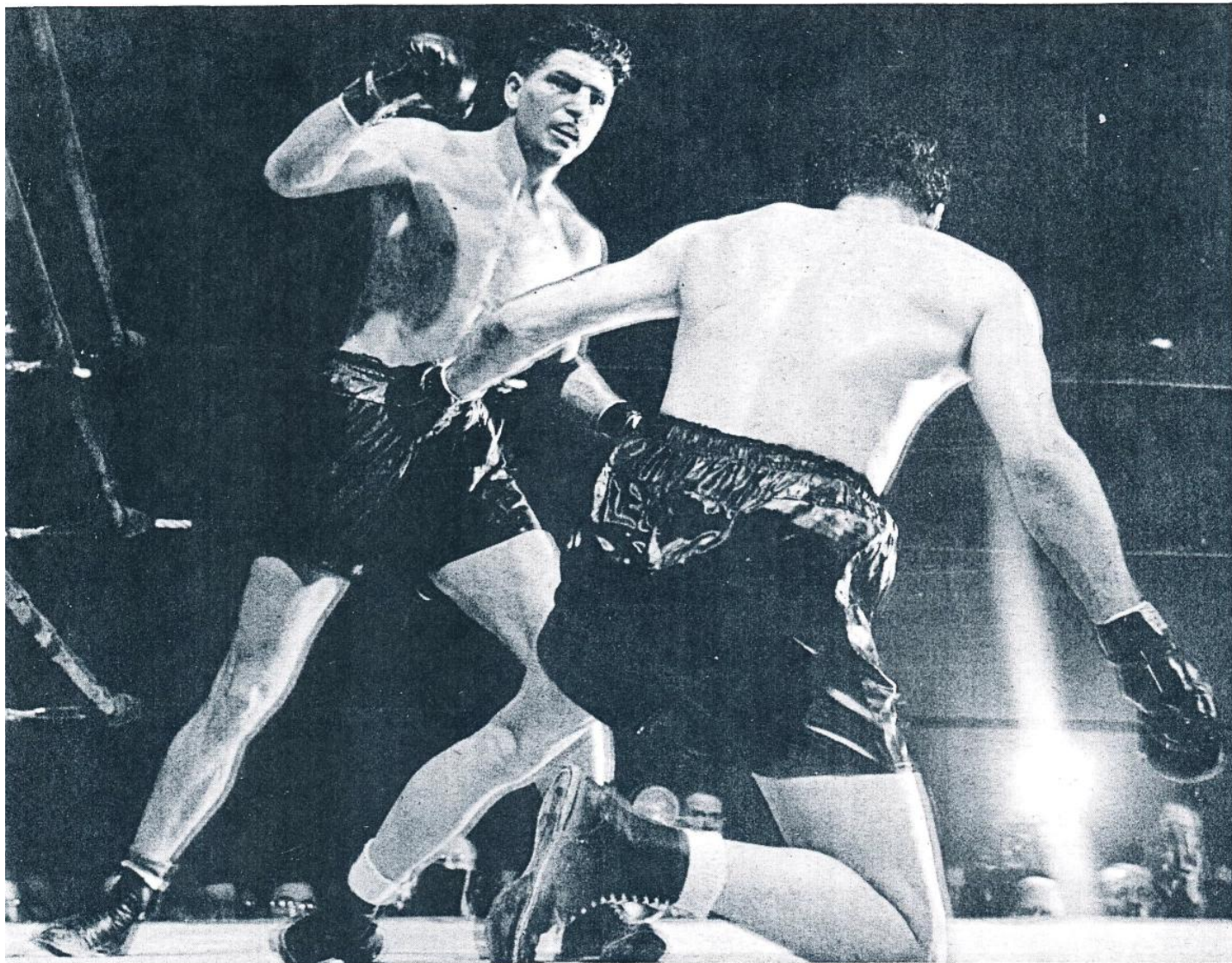
The transition from fighting to acting has come easy to Lou Nova. It is ten years now since he hung up his gloves, and he has been in constant demand on stage, in Hollywood, in television plays and as a night-club entertainer.

This comes as no surprise to Mr. Nova who explains that boxing and show business are closely related, though he affects an injured look when it is pointed out that even a couple of marble-mouthed guys like Maxie Rosenbloom and Tony Galento have been occupied the past summer with the same Big Julie part in other companies of "Guys and Dolls."

"There is this difference," says the articulate Mr.

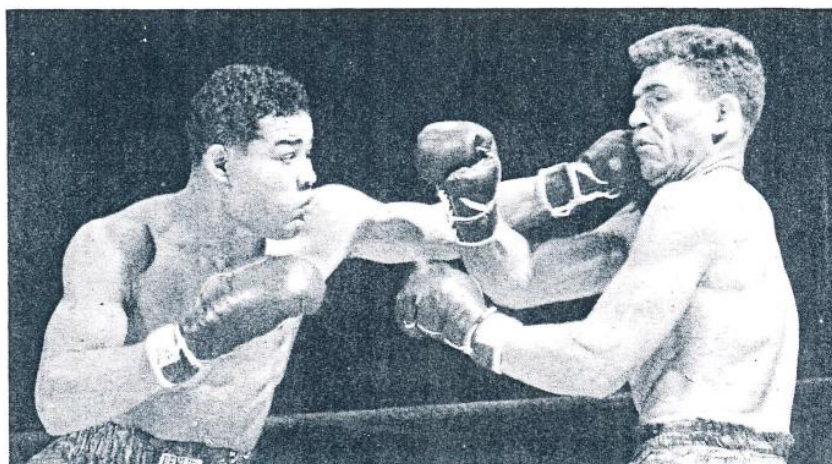
NO YOGA, JUST A RIGHT—In Baer bout a great deal was made of phony yoga yarns concerning Lou, who went along with this publicity hoax. This with Lou's natural talents made him a hot article in heavyweight ranks.

11



GONE—is Max Baer in eleventh round of 1939 Yankee Stadium match with rising young heavy-weight Lou Nova from West

ZING—Joe Louis' stinging left jab catches Nova flush in the kisser in their 1941 bout. But Lou collected \$150,000 for taking one on the jaw from Joe.



LOU NOVA'S NEW CAREER

continued from page 11

Nova. "I was in *THE Broadway company*. The others are in summer stock. Frankly, I don't know how Galento can do the part. He is certainly a stunted Big Julie."

It is a matter of record that Nova has no love for Rosenbloom and it absolutely pains him to be brought into a conversation anent Beer Barrel Galento. For these were the first two of seven fighters in Nova's ten years of professional pugilism to lick the blond, blue-

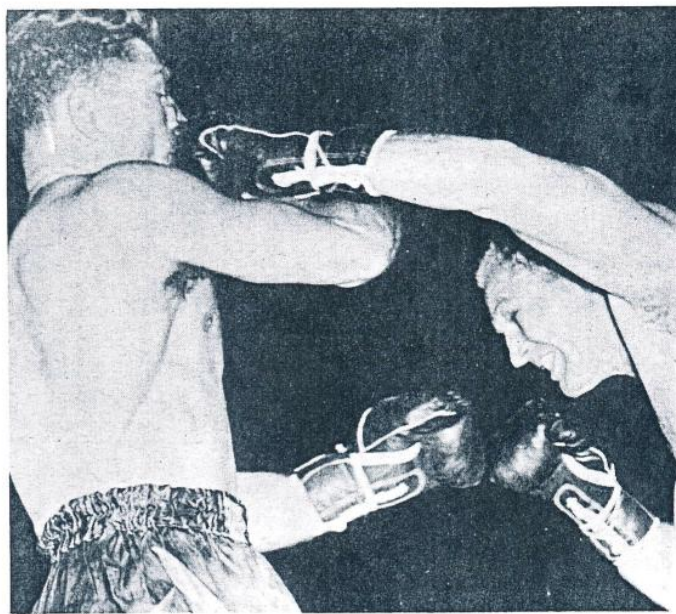
eyed Californian. Do they have to haunt him on stage, too? The irony of it all eats up a guy of Nova's intellectual capacity and vivid imagination.

Nova's manager, almost from the beginning, was Ray Carlin, who accepted one-third of Lou's purses and eventually landed a heavyweight championship fight for Nova with Joe Louis. But Lou was not enamoured of Carlin's match-making ability.

"He shouldn't have put me in with Rosenbloom in



TWO TON TONY GALENTO beat Nova in messy fight in which the blubbery Galento was accused of every dirty and foul trick not in the book.



LOOPING LEFT by Lee Savold in 1942 match draws blood from Nova's nose. Declining at this point, Nova was put away in eight rounds. He continued three years.

Hollywood," says Lou. "And he was absolutely stupid to have made the match with Galento."

Nova fought Slapsie Maxie on June 3, 1938, after going unbeaten in 20 straight pro appearances. In that time he had bopped, among others, large Abe Simon, Salvatore Ruggirello and Lee Ramage.

"Maxie was a Hollywood hero," says Lou, "which made it tough enough. But there were no judges and the referee was a fellow named Roth, who was either Maxie's brother or cousin, I'm not sure which. I won the fight but not in the record books."

Nova went on from there without losing much momentum. He stopped Phil Brubaker and Gunnar Barlund, then handed Tommy Farr, the tough-bitten Welsh coal miner, a more severe thrashing than even Joe Louis was able to administer.

That put him in line for a big Yankee Stadium shot with Max Baer. It was while he trained for Baer that Nova, on the advice of his publicity man Dick McCann, suddenly embraced yoga.

"I had a friend in New York named Rusty Pierce," Nova said. "And Rusty suggested I train at a place in Nyack, N. Y., which was owned by Dr. Pierre Bernard. The doctor was a yoga disciple. Somebody called him the Omnipotent Oom, whatever that meant.

"Well, I thought yoga made me look foolish, what with those pictures of me standing on my head, or sitting cross-legged with a towel draped around my dome, but it helped the gate and I can't say I objected to that. Particularly since I stopped Baer in 11 rounds."

So far so good. Lou was now the hottest thing in the heavyweight ranks outside of Louis. Manager Carlin was finally in a position where he could call his shots.

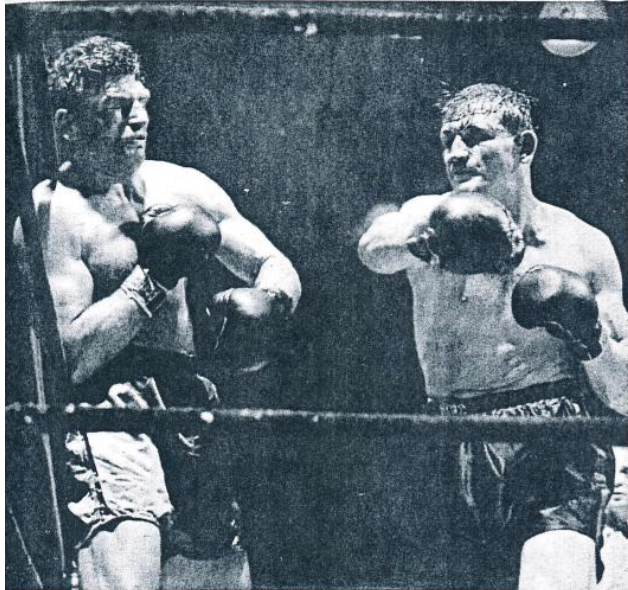
"What does he do but throw me in with this blubbery—well, why go into that?"

The fight mob still classifies this one as the dirtiest brawl of the Louis era. And since Nova himself was a stand-up clean-cut athlete who likened himself to Gene Tunney without the mannerisms which he regarded as artificial in Tunney, Galento took the rap for making

a vicious alley cat mockery out of the boxing sport.

Harry Mendel, publicitor and pundit of the International Boxing Club, recalls that George Blake was imported from California to referee the fight. It was held September, 1939, in Municipal Stadium, Philadelphia.

"Blake let the thing get out of hand," Mendel says. "Joe Jacobs, who was Galento's manager, talked Blake into agreeing not to stop the fight in favor of Nova



BLOCK BUSTER by Joe Baksi drives Nova to ropes and makes him wince in 1945 battle. It was almost the end of the trail for Lou after Baksi licked him.

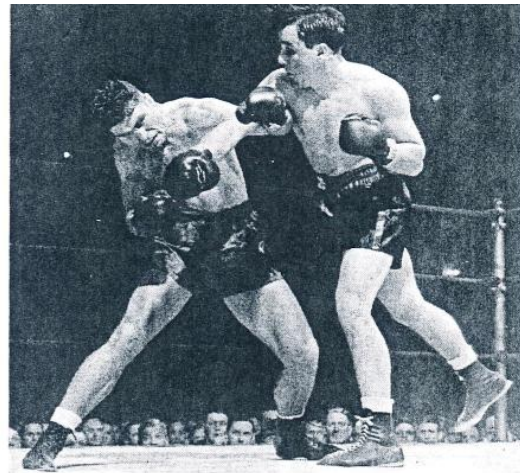
unless he, Jacobs, agreed. So Carlin and Ray Arcel, who were in Nova's corner, insisted on the same privilege.

"Well, nobody wanted to stop it. Everybody accused Galento of heeling and butting, kicking and wrestling and gouging, and well, poor Nova was a sorry mess when they finally ended it in the 14th round. He didn't fight for a long time after that."

He didn't. To be exact, he took a holiday of one year and six weeks from the ring.

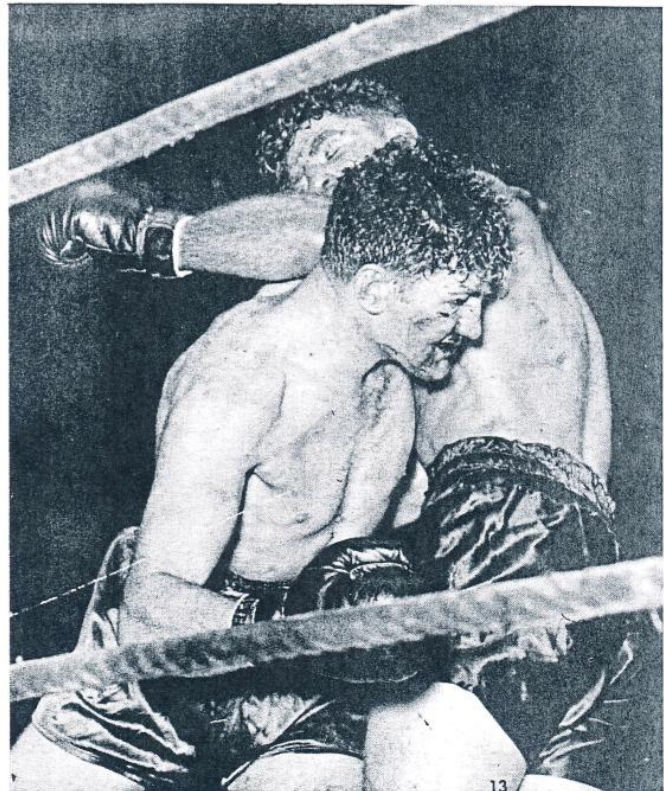
So you can see that Nova, playing a Damon Runyon character and knowing all the time that Rosenbloom and Galento were out front scouting him, had no particular reason to offer little hints on how to do it up for the legitimate theater.

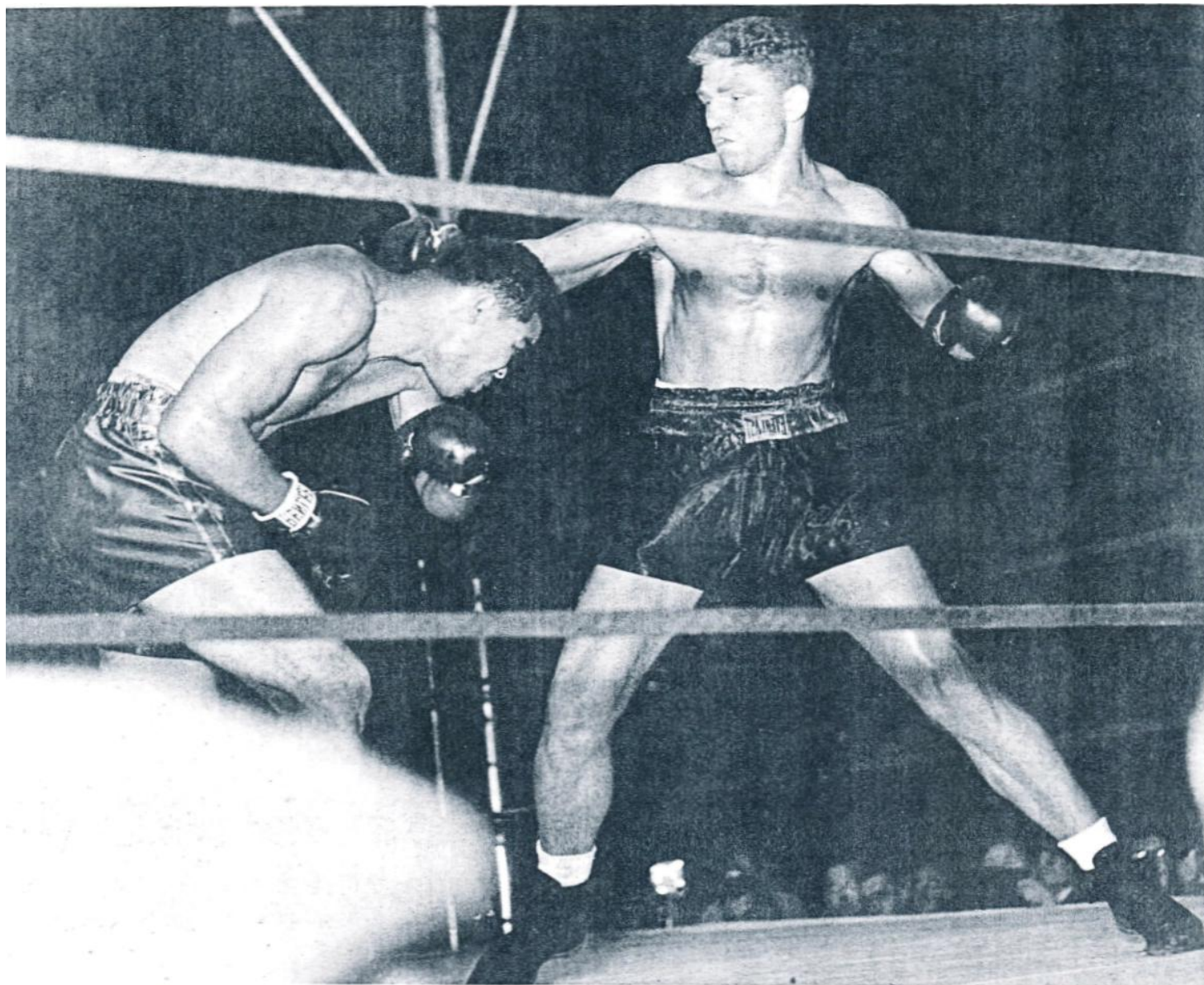
"Most fighters don't need help," Nova said. "They become accustomed to doing things in the public eye. Saying a few words on TV, radio, in public affairs becomes quite easy. Fighters have been in show business since the time of (Continued on page 62)



TAMI MAURIELLO was a bright fistic prospect in this 1942 bout with Nova. Ironically, Lou ended his career with knockout loss to Mauriello in June, 1945.

NIFTY NOVA was hit in this 1941 win over another young heavyweight prospect Pat Comiskey. Latter seems to be giving Lou, an ex-football player from the University of California, a neat shoulder block.





MOMENT OF GLORY, one of his very few in Louis fight, is enjoyed in this action by Nova.

continued from page 10

John L. Sullivan and other greats."

It was Frank Fay, a great entertainer and star of "Harvey," who put the acting bug in Nova, if he wasn't exactly born with it.

"I met Fay in Charley Foy's night club in the San Fernando valley," Nova said. "He was doing this monology—real smart comedy—and I knew he had class. I became a sort of protege of his. He would show me around in the Lamb's Club in New York and go to all my fights. It was Fay who told me Gentleman Jim Corbett might have been remembered as one of the greatest monologists of them all if he hadn't been world champion."

Not long after Joe Louis put Nova away in six rounds, the 6-3 200-pound heavyweight started thinking in terms of show business. He had been matched with Gus Lesnevich. It was the winter of 1941-42. But training in Stillman's Gym, he cracked a couple of ribs and decided to recuperate in the Florida sunshine. Somebody asked him about his plans, and he said:

"They've got theatres down there. I'd like to do some acting."

The next day Lou got a phone call and an offer. A comedy which had a fairly long run on Broadway, "Is That So?", was in rehearsal in Miami. Would Lou be interested in

a part, they asked quite casually.

"That was my start in the acting world," said Nova. "It was a story of a fighter and a manager who are broke and wind up as first and second butlers in a rich man's home. Well, with two butlers, the guy's got to be rich. The gal in the play was Kim Hunter. And the reviews were fabulous. One writer said the show was better than the original production, and one headline read: 'Better Comic than Cosmic.'"

The reference here was to Nova's publicized cosmic punch, outgrowth of Lou's own fertile imagination while he was in training in Pompton Lakes, N. J., for the Joe Louis

LOU NOVA'S NEW CAREER

(Continued from page 62)

championship fight in 1941.

The way Nova explains it, the practice of yoga was strictly publicity. But the cosmic punch? He believed in it.

"What it really was was a super right cross," he said, without trying to be funny. "I thought I could take Louis out with it. I understand Louis was plenty worried about this cosmic punch, but I just think he respected me as a fighter after seeing me stop Baer. When I reflect on that Louis fight, I am sure I got bad advice. They gave me implicit directions to box Louis for ten rounds and then open up. I should have fought him. Most people thought the fight was a stinker and made me the goat. But I threw one cosmic punch that missed by a quarter of an inch. I think I was that close to the title."

Nova pulled down \$150,000 for taking one of the choppers from Louis, or about half of his entire earning power in the ring which wasn't bad for a young man who quit the University of California after his freshman year in search of money in a year, 1935, when it was a scarce commodity.

His father, a noted concert pianist, died when he was only 6. Lou says pop was intimate in those years with the most famous composer of his time, Ferde Grofe. And Lou himself had all the worldly goods any kid could ask for.

"I used to go to kindergarten in a limousine," he said. "But when pop died, I went out in the streets selling papers."

At Frick Junior High School and then at Alameda High in San Francisco, Nova is still remembered as a great athlete. He got to the University of California on an athletic scholarship.

"Got it for football, basketball and track," he said. "I did no boxing. I still hold a scholastic record for the

javelin throw—something like 178 feet. But after that first year of college I went out looking for a job and decided to see Spider Roach, the boxing coach of the Olympic Club in San Francisco.

"I still remember my first fight. With a guy named Babe McCurdy. What I didn't know about pacing would fill a book. I hit this guy on the button and almost knocked him out. But when the round ended I was exhausted. I couldn't raise my arms. They had to throw in the towel for me in the second round."

That same year of 1935 Nova knocked out McCurdy and won the U.S. A.A.U. title in St. Louis in his 12th amateur fight. From there he went to Paris on the Normandie and came back with the world title. His first professional manager was Sam Lorimer, who had been done out of Max Baer's contract by Ancel Hoffman, and it was passed on to Ray Carlin.

Nova says he and Jim Corbett have this much in common: Jim was the first A.A.U. heavyweight champ to represent the Olympic Club. He was the last. And they both became actors.

"I'm proud of my career as an athlete and as a fighter," he says. "Most of my high school buddies are working in gas stations."

Lou was asked if, in his opinion, his education had an adverse effect on his boxing career. He said it did.

"Education tends to stimulate one's imagination," he said. "And a guy with imagination finds some of his stamina sapped before a fight or any other kind of competitive event. I note that Roger Bannister makes the same sort of admission. You take a guy like Rocky Marciano. His stamina is tremendous. But if he had great imagination he'd be harmed by it."

Recently Nova won a libel suit

from Vince Flaherty and the Los Angeles Examiner because Flaherty, in a column, described Nova as a cringing coward. The courts ruled that Lou was entitled to \$35,000 in damages.

"The way it happened was like this," he said. "I had been writing a sports column for some weeklies and I was on pretty friendly terms with Flaherty. But he kept degrading Pacific Coast League baseball, and I retorted in a column that the brand of ball on the Coast wasn't as bad as Flaherty painted it.

"Next thing I know, he puts in a malicious rap at me. It was really nasty, made me sick. Happened about a year and a half ago. It made me feel like a cowering idiot. I got in touch with my attorney and asked Flaherty and the Hearst paper for a retraction. When that wasn't forthcoming, I took legal action."

Nova's last fight took place on June 25, 1945, against Tami Mauriello, and IBC managing director Harry Markson tells one about it.

"A few days before the fight," Harry said, "Nova was in my office in the Brill Building in New York, and a friend of mine named John Rowan was trying to interest me in buying some bonds. Lou sat there, quietly, and then as Rowan was about to leave, he said: 'Why don't you get in touch with me after my next fight. I might buy some.'

"Well, Lou goes up to Boston and Tami Mauriello stopped him in the first round, and the next day Nova gets a call from Rowan. John reminds him about his interest in bonds, and Lou says: 'Yes, I remember. But my wife thinks I should buy something besides bonds. She says life insurance.'

Nova has since been divorced. Occasionally his name creeps into the Broadway columns. He has been seen with Sloan Simpson, former wife of ex-New York Mayor Bill O'Dwyer, with Helen Gallagher, star of "Pajama Game," and with Lois O'Brien, ingenue in "Phoenix 55." And there are those who insist Nova looks and acts like an oversized Burt Lancaster. Lou doesn't see anything libelous in such a description.