

Where Strategy Failed

Hand-Picked Jake La Motta Upset the Applecart When He Stopped Marcel Cerdan to Win the World Middleweight Crown

By TED CARROLL

JAKE LAMOTTA, the Bronx Bull, is world's middleweight champion solely because he seemed to be on the downgrade and had been losing decisions now and then during the past year or so. As everyone knows, the Cerdan board of strategy singled out Jake as a title foe for the Frenchman's first defense of his crown because LaMotta did not appear as formidable as either Steve Belloise or Ray Robinson.

When the New York State Boxing Commission balked at his selection the Cerdan mentors, rather than give up on a match which looked like a soft touch to them, moved the whole business out to Detroit. Riled at this maneuver, New York's boxing boss, Eddie Eagan, declared that in his state the LaMotta-Cerdan fuss had no title rating at all. As off the track about LaMotta as were Messrs. Burston, Richman, Longman, etc., Commissioner Eagan broke all records getting back into LaMotta's dressing stall after the fight where he bestowed official accolades and recognition upon the new titleholder.

Anyone could have gotten a million to one the evening of Nov. 14, 1947, following his fantastic fandango with Billy Fox, that no world's title would ever adorn the brow of Jake LaMotta. This fromogenous farce seemed to have written finis to the career of the Bull from the Bronx. But here he is less than two years later a champion of the world!

All this proves once again that attempting to foretell the finicky fates is futile. Who would have imagined following his lack-lustre showing with Robert Villemain just two months ago that Jake LaMotta would come back to defeat Marcel Cerdan?

Jake LaMotta was a hand-picked title opponent if ever there was one. The fact that the deal boomeranged, winding up in opposite fashion from what was anticipated by its manipulators, doesn't alter matters. He has been the most in-and-out fighter active for some time. He has handled capable ringmen like Tommy Yarosz with comparative ease and then looked mediocre against the likes of Verne Lester. Sluggish and sloppy against Villemain, he was a ball of fire against Joey DeJohn shortly after.

At his best three or four years ago Jake LaMotta was a fine middleweight. He was too good. Oddly enough the only real opposition afforded him came from the great welterweight Ray Robinson who took four of five battles from iron jawed Jake. For all of that, LaMotta is still the only man to ever win a decision over the Sugar Baby. Ray had the speed and maneuverability to stay clear of LaMotta's bull-like charges as well as the punching power needed to jar Jake's concrete jaw.

In his own middleweight division the leaders stayed clear of him. They were frank about it, admitting that Jake's brand of body punishment was not conducive to a long career. Things finally got so tough for LaMotta he hired the celebrated ballyhoo man, Francis Albertanti, to present his case to the public. After a struggle to further the LaMotta cause Francis threw up his hands with this comment. "I can't get LaMotta in the papers because the Russians are getting all the space. I can't get him into the ring because nobody will fight him. I don't blame them, he tears their belly apart."

Because of the wariness of the other 160-pounders LaMotta found himself on a diet of welters and light-heavyweights. Few welters would meet Tommy Bell a couple of years back so he and LaMotta had their own series of bouts all of them won by Jake. The squat Bronxite made many forays into the light-heavyweight division belting over such as Bob Satterfield, Jimmy Reeves, and Popeye Woods.

As far as can be recalled Jake has never barred anybody. The reluctance of his paler brethren to meet him sent him in there

with many tough and dangerous Negro boxers who were being side-tracked also—fellows such as Jimmy Edgar, Bert Lytell, Lloyd Marshall, Nate Bolden and Holman Williams. Against most of these Jake did very well indeed. Edgar looked like the new terror of the ring until Jake stepped in and slowed him down back in 1942. LaMotta made one of his best fights against clever Holman Williams in Detroit on Aug. 7, 1946. Detroit has always been his lucky spot. In 15 fights there, including the one with Cerdan, he was victorious in all but one, a decision loss to Ray Robinson on Feb. 26, 1943. Jake's win over feared southpaw Bert Lytell on April 27, 1945, in Boston was another one of his most notable victories.

Jake's biggest asset is that steel chin. Probably no middleweight has ever been as impervious to punishment. Some claim hard hitting Lloyd Marshall had him on the canvas in their Cleveland bout back in 1944 but Jake denies this stoutly, declaring he has never been knocked off his feet. While he doesn't come right out and say it, it is fairly obvious from his comments that he considers Ray Robinson the best man he ever met and never fails to put the decision he won over the Sugar Baby in Detroit on Feb. 5, 1943, at the top of his fistic accomplishments.

The choice of LaMotta as a title foe by Cerdan over Steve Belloise, No. 1 contender of the moment, brings back memories of the deal that resulted in Pete Latzo's winning the world's welterweight championship 23 years ago. Mickey Walker was the defending champion in this one. Joe Dundee of Baltimore had demonstrated his superiority over the field to become the No. 1 challenger for Mickey's title back in 1926.

Dundee seemed to be the tougher proposition for the Toy Bulldog, so cagey Jack Kearns cast an eye about for a softer touch than Max Waxman's boy from Baltimore.

Latoz was the hero of the coal mines down around his native Scranton so when local promoters, egged on by Latoz's managers, Paddy Mullins and Lou Raymond, came up with a big guarantee for a title defense by Walker against the home town pride, Kearns grabbed at the bait.

It looked like a good deal since the Toy Bulldog had found Latoz rather easy pickings in a no-decision bout in Newark three years previously.

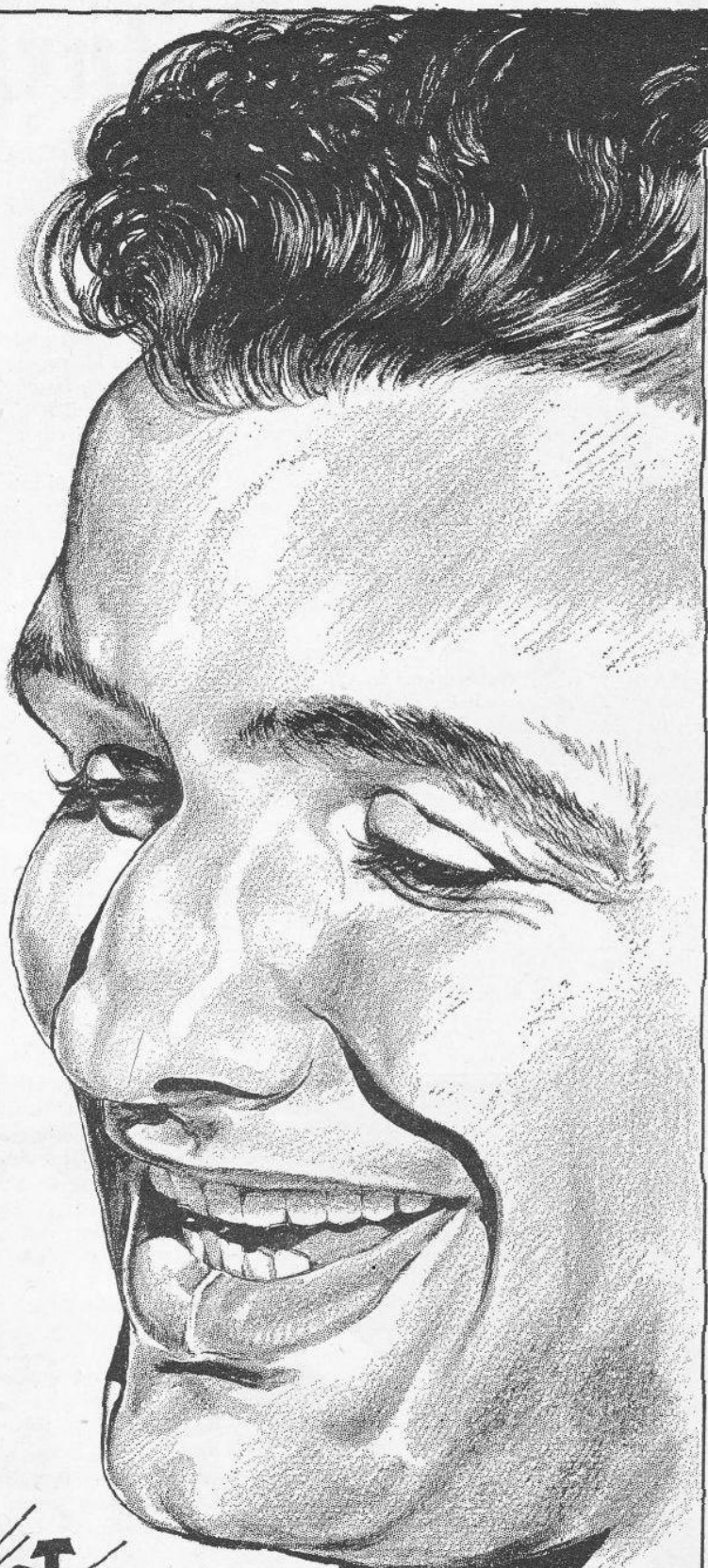
Latoz had come a long way as a fighter in those three years, however, and the 147-pound class limit was starting to trouble Mickey. The unexpected happened and even as LaMotta was to do 23 years later the Pennsylvania boy fighting his best fight, won a ten-round verdict over Walker, winning the welterweight crown on May 30, 1926.

Such cases as those provided by LaMotta and Latoz are rareties though, in most instances such as these the preferred opponent runs true to form and all goes well with the defending champion.

The effect of his new title on LaMotta's future fighting form should be interesting. There has been plenty of evidence in the past that Jake who always fancied himself the victim of a run-around from previous titleholders allowed himself certain lapses from what was expected of him. Many feel that in his present frame of mind and wearing a crown, LaMotta has the style to always thwart Cerdan regardless of whether the North African has both arms in working order or not. Jake, not the erstwhile hero of the Paris boulevards, is the younger man they point out, and the opposition faced and defeated over his career by LaMotta is far superior to the competition Cerdan has met.

The workings of chance are strange. Few fighters have been as fortunate as LaMotta in winding up fighting for and winning a crown when supposedly past his

(Continued on page 49)



LAST LAUGH for JAKE
LAMOTTA
 THE NEW MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPION..

CTED 3/22/72



..BACK WHEN JAKE LAMOTTA WAS A REAL RIP-ROAPER..
 KAYING LIGHT HEAVIES..
 ..BEATING PAV ROBINSON...

MIDDLEWEIGHT MANSION



..HE NEVER EVEN GOT NEAR A TITLE SHOT..



..JAKE GOT DISGUSTED...
 STARTED LOSING NOW AND THEN..



..THE CORDAN PEOPLE..
 FIGURING HE WAS THROUGH..
 HAND PICKED HIM FOR A TITLE FEE..

..SO..JAKE WOUND UP WORLDS CHAMPION!!



Remember Peter **LATZO!**
 ..HE WAS "HANDPICKED" BUT.. WON THE WELTER TITLE..

WHERE STRATEGY FAILED

(Continued from page 12)

peak. As LaMotta contemplates his present high status, if he really "played possum" as he hints he did in some of his recent bouts, he must be getting a hearty laugh out of being a champion who became one because most people thought he was through.

At long range Jake gives a stolid impression but once warmed up he is surprisingly voluble with definite, unyielding opinions. On the subject of modern fighters versus the old-timers, LaMotta is rabid. "Nobody can tell me the old-timers were better," he yells.

"In every sport the guys today are breaking records, they're way ahead of the old guys, why not the fighters, too? People are healthier today, the insurance companies say we live longer. Babies don't have rickets and things like that any more." Having had three youngsters of his own, Jake is qualified to speak on that score.

His theory for the disappearance of the little fighters in this country is also interesting. "People live better today and the kids are bigger, that's why we don't have bantamweights and flyweights the way we used to," he explains.

Switching to boxing styles, Jake is equally emphatic. "People say I'm not a smart fighter, but I can always hit those clever guys. Because a fighter doesn't stand up straight and dance around pretty, everybody thinks he's dumb. How would a little guy like me ever be able to stand up and jab? I roll with punches and I don't get hit anywhere near as much as it may look outside.

"When I'm through fighting, I'm gonna stay in the fight business. A lot of guys say they can't wait till they're through boxing to try something else. Fighting has been good to me and it's good enough for me."

To everything Jake expounds, brother-manager Joey LaMotta nods assent. When Jake has finished he never fails to add, "Don't forget to mention Joey LaMotta, the world's greatest fight manager."

"YOU CAN HAVE 'EM"

(Continued from page 15)

Tremble's fist, forgot all about dying instantly. As the police climbed in one side of the ring, Whitehead, Tremble and myself leaped over the ropes on the other side.

The three of us dashed down the front stairs and raced down Washington Avenue with the police pursuing us.

We outdistanced the policemen by the time we reached Third Avenue. Calling to Tremble and Whitehead to follow me, I headed for the Allen Hotel, situated at Second Avenue and Third Street, where I knew a friendly clerk. Luckily, he was on watch when we dashed into the lobby, scaring some lobby sitters out of their wits.

The clerk hid us in a room for the night. Early the next morning, I contacted Frank (Butch) Nodell, promoter of the fight. He brought Tremble's and Whitehead's clothes to the hotel. They remained in the hotel until late the next night when they sneaked out and went their separate ways.

Some people still refer to that era as the "good old days," but they can have 'em as far as I am concerned.

NEWS OF THE MAT WORLD

(Continued from page 31)

Lancashire, and Vic Coleman, middleweight title aspirant. . . .

Later in the month another outdoor bill, in Southampton, drew a similar attendance. . . . In the land of John Bull, wrestling promoters have banded together in a Wrestling Promoters Association.

In Zurich, Switzerland, in Rome, in Vienna, Austria, tournaments are in progress to decide the yearly champions in those areas. . . . News that Steve Casey, Irish ex-world champion, may come here in the next month or two, prevails in London. . . . Primo Carnera is also expected.

TUNNEY TAKE NOTICE!

(Continued from page 24)

foul to those that win."—1 Henry IV

"Fair is foul, and foul is fair."—Macbeth

"O! O! 'tis foul!"—King Lear

"It is apparent foul-play."—King John

"I doubt some foul play."—Hamlet

"We shall try fortune in a second fight."

—Julius Caesar

"I will win for him if I can."—Hamlet

"So, so, so, so: they laugh that win."

—Othello

"I have no name, no title."—Richard II

"Make claim and title to the crown."—

Henry V

"My title's good, and better far than his."—3 Henry VI

"IF I have austerely punish'd you, Your compensation makes amends."

—The Tempest

". . . . But reason with the fellow,

Before you punish him."—Coriolanus

"Take that, and that:"—Richard III

"Stand up, stand up; stand if you be a man."—Romeo & Juliet

"The competitors enter."—Twelfth Night

"Hurt him in eleven places."—Twelfth Night

"This poor right hand of mine."—Titus Andronicus

"Are you hurt i' the groin? methought he made a shrewd thrust at your belly."

—2 Henry IV

"What, art thou hurt?"

"Ay, ay, a scratch, a scratch, marry, 'tis enough."—Romeo & Juliet

"Why the devil came you between us? I was hurt under your arm."—Romeo & Juliet

". . . . I saw you lately,

When you caught hurt parting two that fought."—Pericles

". . . . Let the old ruffian know

I have many other ways to die, meantime

Laugh at his challenge."—Antony & Cleopatra

"Young man, have you challenged Charles, the wrestler?"—As You Like It

"He's fat and scant of breath."—Hamlet

"Say you? Come on."—Hamlet

"Ye fat-guts! lie down?"—1 Henry IV

"Would he were fatter! but I fear him not."—Julius Caesar

". . . . O, it is excellent

To have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous

To use it like a giant."—Measure for Measure.

"You weigh equally; a feather will turn the scales."—Measure for Measure

"That makes the weight."—Antony & Cleopatra

"Winning will put any man into courage."

—Cymbaline

SOUTHERN OHIO JABS

By J. JIMMIE AMANN

EZZARD CHARLES' fifteen-round decision over Jersey Joe Walcott in Chicago was without doubt the leading fight news from this section. There wasn't a lot of money exchanged on the fight locally as Charles was a head-on favorite in his hometown.

Secondary was the announcement by Sam and Benny Becker of the signing for a second match* for September 19th between Joe Maxim and Gus Lesnevich for Crosley field for the American light-heavyweight title which Maxim won earlier in the year from Lesnevich. This announcement went up in the air when it was announced on July 5th that Lesnevich would meet Charles for the heavyweight title in August in New York. At this writing the Beckers are hammering tooth and nail with the Cincinnati and New York State and N.B.A. commissions that Lesnevich cannot break the September contract in Cincinnati. Fitting into the picture is the sudden announcement that Maxim will be laid up with a bad case of yellow jaundice at his home in Cleveland. The threads are tangled somewhere along the line!

The third piece of news was the entry of Dick Nesbitt, former national football star and now radio announcer, into the boxing game as a boxing promoter. Nesbitt staged two shows in New York in the month of June at the Parkway outdoor arena. In the first show, Joey Brown, New Orleans, defeated Willie Russell of Columbus in ten rounds, both weighing 137½ pounds. Jimmy Welch, Columbus, knocked out Bob Love of Cincinnati in a seven-round middle match; Joe Kelly, Cincinnati lightweight, knocked out Bob Roberts of Indianapolis in four; Ronnie Hamlin, Cincinnati middle, stopped Dick Vess of Dayton in five, and in a heavyweight match, George Rankin of Cincinnati KO'd Johnny Clemmons of Dayton, Ohio, in the first round.

On his second show, Nesbitt presented Joe Discepoli of Cincinnati and Mario Coll of Pittsburgh in the main eight-round bout. Discepoli, 135, won the decision over Coll, 134.

In supporting bouts, Freddy Newbill, Cincinnati, 158, won from Cass Tate, Cleveland, 160, in eight; Bob Shoemaker, Cincinnati, 157½, KO'd Cusman Dordle, 159½, in four, and Ronnie Hamlin, Cincinnati, 152, won from Don Pinto, Pittsburgh, 154½, in six rounds.

Nesbitt, located with a local radio and television station, did not do too well at the gate although the video reception was perfect.

Joe Basco, Barberton, Ohio's, traveling globe-trotting manager, took his good lightweight, Rudy Zadell, down to Miami, Fla., and Rudy, after fighting seven terrific rounds with Tony Riccio, saw the match end in a no decision with the bout being called due to the rain. Miami reports say that the boys fought one or two rounds in an absolute downpour which found almost the entire lot of spectators retreating. Zadell made a terrific hit in Miami and is slated back there for a series of matches.

Around Fountain Square with the punchers and their pilots—Sonny Bratcher, Arkansas City, and Kansas City flyweight amateur champion, is going like a house afire. Sonny plans to turn pro in the next 15 to 18 months. Keep tabs on this kid you pro fight pilots. . . . Latest to get on my weekly boxing letter service, one dollar a month or ten bucks per year, was the California and Colorado State Athletic Commissions, with a renewal from Morrie Salzer, Denver promoter. . . . More info on this to you interested in same at 6716 Palmetto Street, Cincinnati 27, Ohio. . . . This address also available for those managers who want local and national action, for queries, etc. . . . Only a few copies of my 'Managers', Promoters' Guide left for 1949, one buck each, 1001 names, addresses listed. . . . Emmett Jacobs, Roanoke, Va., manager, is priming his bantamweight, Lou Yonkers, for some big money matches in the "little men's" territories. . . . Bobby Powell, former star fighter of years ago, is now serving the town around Russell, Ky., and vicinity with fight pictures. . . . Earl Tye, Sandusky, Ohio, welter, is looking for action in these parts. . . . We read with regret of the passing of Richie Mitchell, great lightweight of the 20's, on June 26th. . . . Morris Salzer and George Zaharias have joined forces in promoting in Denver. According to Ezzard Charles, at a party tendered him in Cincinnati after the Walcott fight, Charles said he was fighting strictly to instructions in the fight, especially in the seventh round. . . . A good little sheet is the *Kingside Weekly*, edited and published by Jack Doran down Miami, Fla., way. . . . Thanks Jack. . . . THE RING, without doubt, is the best seller of all sports magazines.