

LONG-STANDING MYSTERY SOLVED.  
"NEW" 1929 FIGHT FOR MANDELL  
DISCOVERED, AND VERIFIED.

By Bob Soderman

About three years ago I was asked to do some research into the early record of former lightweight king, the late Sammy Mandell. This research involved going thru microfilms of the Chicago Tribune, mainly, plus other Chicago newspapers, starting with the year 1920; Mandell's first pro year. This pursuit of the truth turned up many previously undiscovered fights for Mandell; principally for the years 1920 thru 1924.

However, while doing research on other matters, for years in the 1930s, other "new" fights were discovered for Mandell; beginning in 1933 and extending into 1934, when he finally called it quits. As a consequence, Mandell's career and all of its bright and not-so-bright moments became a further challenge. The challenge lay in finding out more about the fighter who was called "The Rockford Shiek". What was there about him, that made him so successful up to 1930; and why did he spend the next four years sliding downhill, without regaining the limelight?

A veteran Chicago Daily News sportswriter, Mike Murphy, told me he had written a four-part life story of Mandell, that appeared in the Chicago Daily News, starting on July 20, 1929. This series ran just prior to Mandell's successful title defense against Tony Canzoneri, in Chicago, on August 2, 1929. In studying the microfilm of Murphy's articles, which furnished a few clues on his first pro year in 1920, there was also time to study Murphy's daily stories on the upcoming fight. In one of these stories Murphy mentioned that Mandell had had his last tune-up fight for his title defense, on June 20, 1929, in Jackson, Michigan, against Tony Lombardo.

But- there was no such fight shown in Mandell's record anywhere; not in the Ring Record Book, not in T.S. Andrews, not in Everlast. And a search through each of the Chicago newspapers, on microfilm, didn't turn up a result mention for this fight. Indeed, the New York Times didn't have this result; neither did the San Francisco Chronicle; nor the Peoria Journal.

So, here was a mystery. Was Mike Murphy's story in the Chicago Daily News correct, and did Sammy Mandell fight in Jackson, Michigan on June 20, 1929? How could this mystery be solved?

On March 17, 1984 I wrote to the Reference Librarian of the Jackson Citizen Patriot newspaper, in Jackson, Michigan. I explained the background of the mystery and asked help in verifying that Mandell fought in Jackson on the date in question.

Finally, on Thursday April 26 the long-standing mystery was solved. A letter arrived from the Jackson District Library, not from the newspaper, in Jackson, Michigan. The letter was from the library's reference librarian, and said: "Please find enclosed a photostatic copy of the Jackson Citizen Patriot for June 21, 1929. I hope this is of help to you in your research."

The photostat was headlined- "Sammy Mandell batters-" but that's all there was to the top. However, the story was all there, including a round-by-round report of the action. The headline on top of the story said- "Toledo Boxer Fights Gamely to Stay Limit. Champion unable to deliver knockout despite best efforts."

The story went on- "Sammy Mandell, world's lightweight champion, easily outfought Tony Lombardo of Toledo in nine out of ten rounds of their boxing bout, staged by the Jackson Athletic Club at the fairground Thursday night."

"Lombardo, battered and bleeding, and at times all but helpless before the champion's battering blows, fought gamely through the whole 10 rounds, at times forcing the fighting himself, and during his groggiest moments foiling Sammy's most determined efforts to knock him out."

"And at the close of the fight, when Lombardo staggered to his feet and prepared to leave the ring, the crowd wildly applauded his gameness and his fighting ability which, though not good enough for Mandell, permitted him to stand up at times and make a real showing against the champion."

Lombardo's best round was the first, holding Mandell even; but from then on Sammy's greater experience and skill cut Tony to ribbons. Tony's nose bled profusely from the fourth round on and at the end of the fight was carrying on with both eyes virtually swollen shut.

So, everyone can add this 1929 bout to Mandell's record; as one of thirteen he had that year. The 1983 Ring Record Book however, only shows eleven bouts; they also didn't show Mandell's August 28, 1929 bout at Petoskey, Michigan against Frankie Frisco, in which he scored a three round knockout.

Mandell also had eleven bouts in 1933; not the mere two bouts shown in Ring. Here are these eleven bouts:

June 14	Ray Collins	Chicago	W dec 10
June 19	Ronnie Headley	Ottawa, Can.	L dec 10
July 4	Johnny Hayes	"	W dec 10
Aug. 2	Bud Jennings	London, Ont.	W ko 4
Aug. 19	Tommy Bland	Kirkland Lake, Ont.	L dec 10

more

Sept. 4	Iowa Joe Rivers	Windsor, Ont.	L dec 10
Oct. 13	Mickey Serrian	Syracuse	L dec 6
Oct. 23	Jackie Davis	Cleveland	L dec 10
Nov. 6	Battling Nelson	Sioux City	W dec 8
Dec. 11	Johnny Stanton	Sioux Falls, So. Dak.	Draw 10
Dec. 15	Sherald Kennard	Fargo, No. Dak.	W dec 10

Here is Mandell's 1934 record; eight bouts, not the six shown in 1983 Ring:

Jan. 31	Tony Herrera	El Paso	L koby 6
Feb. 16	Chico Vasquez	Tucson	W ko 6
Feb. 23	Mike Nelson	"	W dec 8
Mar. 2	Tommy Elks	Nogales	W ko 2
Mar. 13	Al Manfredo	Fresno	L koby 4
Mar. 23	Archie Kovich	Reno	Draw 10
Apr. 12	Chico Vasquez	Cheyenne	W ko 2
June 27	Joe Bernal	Oakland	L koby 6

My record total for Mandell now shows 191 bouts. The 1983 Ring shows 168 bouts. All of the additional bouts that I have found for Mandell have previously been submitted to Ring for inclusion in their next record book, hopefully. Now this June 20, 1929 bout in Jackson, Michigan can also be added to Mandell's record, for the 1984 Ring Record Book.

Even with all of the research already done on Mandell's record, by myself and others, I have a hunch there are more Mandell fights that never got into any record books. Some day soon I hope to be able to go thru microfilm of the Rockford, Illinois newspaper, Mandell's hometown; to see if their reporting on Mandell's career progress might not turn up a few more "new" fights for Sammy.