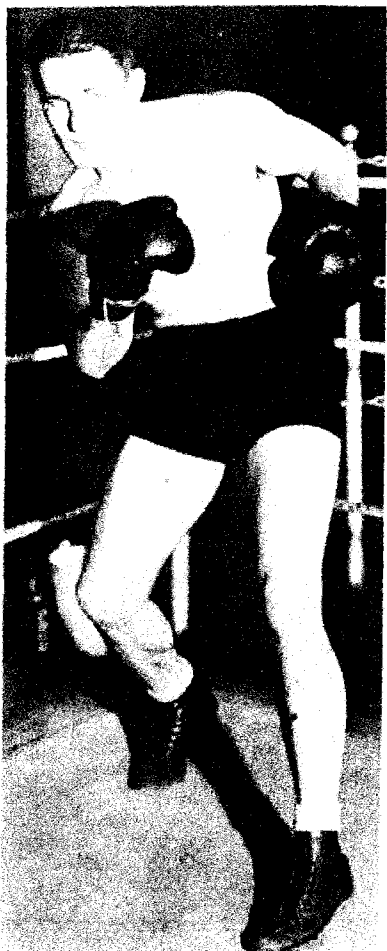


TOMMY LOUGHRAN ARTICLE
1956
BOXING & WRESTLING MAGAZINE



Here's the candid opinion concerning present day boxers by a guy who should know—ex-175 lb. king Tommy Loughran.

By TOMMY LOUGHRAN
as told to Murray Olderman

BY rights, you'd expect me to say today's fighters are a bunch of bums who wouldn't know how to hold a glove up against the sluggers of my day. After all, I was around in the Golden Twenties when you had Dempsey and Tunney, Greb and Gibbons, Leonard and Tendler. I find, however, there's always a tendency to disparage the present and glorify the past. So I can't buy the notion that kids today don't know how to fight.

In talent and ability, they stack up with any era. You take a kid like Carmela Costa, the little featherweight who's had his ups and downs. I'm supposed to know something about the science of boxing, and I tell you that Costa has the best footwork I've ever seen in the ring. He's absolutely amazing when you consider he's working on sand with those three-inch pads they use today. In my time you only had a hard one-inch pad that gave you traction.

I think Floyd Patterson is the best looking fighter, bar none, I've seen in my 35 years' association with the ring as a participant and observer. If he maintains only the normal amount of progress that comes with experience, he'll make you forget Dempsey, Louis, Marciano or conceivably any fighter who ever lived.

NOTHING WRONG WITH BOXING

There's nothing wrong with boxing that a little smart promotion and better management wouldn't cure. These fellows today don't know how to promote. They loused the market with mismatches and mediocrity in the interest of feeding that weekly feature to the television audience. It's all too easy to shrug it off and say that television is killing boxing, but I say just the opposite. Never in the history of the ring has there been such a universal interest in the sport. We've got a whole new breed of fan created by the availability of the fighters in the nation's living rooms.

Boxing is never going to die as long as you've got two guys in the ring ready to beat each other's brains out, I don't care whether it's under the bright lights of Madison Square Garden or in a human circle on some grassed-over corner lot. The trick is to provide this new multitude of fans with the exciting type of bouts that will sustain their interest.

I've got to laugh when people nudge me on the chest and wink. "Hah, it ain't like the good old days, Tommy. There just ain't any fighters around today."

The other day I'm sitting in my room at the New York Athletic Club riffling through some old clippings when I run across a yellowed cutout from the old New York Sun. It was dated January, 1928, and the piece written by Willbur Wood, the sports editor, started like this:

"Never in the history of the ring has there been such a dearth of talent."

Sounds like the same old tune, huh.

The talent is still with us. They just don't know what to do with it. I feel Gil Turner from my home town of Philadelphia is an example of this. Gil possesses great fighting ability, which he showed earlier in his career. Yet at the grand old age of 25 he's (Continued on page 44)

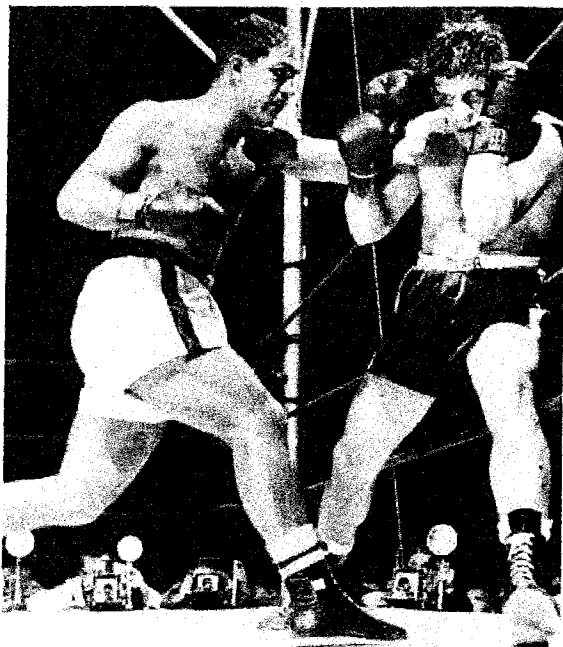
TODAY'S FIGHTERS!

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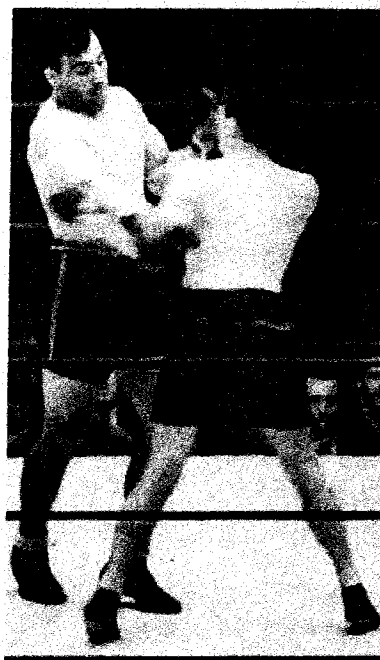


Left thrown by Ray Robinson dazes contender Bobo Olsen. Loughran contends that biggest menace in boxing is presence in ring of such old-timers as Ray Robinson and Archie Moore.

When Rocky Marciano threw punches every part of his body moved. He didn't get hit as much as people thought, he was moving target.

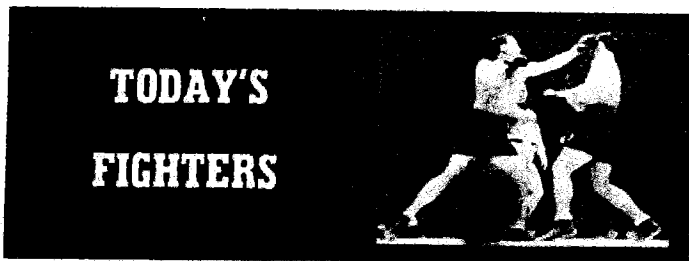


Although outweighed 65 lbs. Tommy Loughran managed to give Primo Carnera tough battle.



They're Better Than We Were

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 considered in some quarters as virtually a veteran over the hill. At the age of 25 I was only beginning to approach my peak and remember that at 32 I was fighting Primo Carnera for the heavyweight championship of the world.

TURNER MISHANDLED

Gil, who still has a chance to emerge as a champion in the middleweight division, was the victim of poor judgment by his managers. He was mismatched in championship bouts, such as the one with Cavilan, when he wasn't ready, and he was forced to make weight that crippled his natural aggressive fighting style. Tony DeMarco, who won and lost the welterweight championship, is another man who was victimized by being pushed too fast. He ranks with the punchers of all time, pound for pound, in sheer punishing power, but they haven't given him the chance for normal development. Who can say that a brawler like Carmen Basilio wouldn't be a delight to watch in any era?

Carmela Costa swallowing Baby Vasquez glove has best footwork.



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I'm loyal enough to my hey-day to insist that Mickey Walker, as a welterweight, would have annihilated both of them—but, mind you, after a pretty good pier six brawl. Jack Britton, Ace Hudkins—these are top men of the 20s—and the DeMarco-Basilio brand of fighter could have given any of them a full evening.

Too many former fighters tend to look down their pushed in noses at today's kids and sit back with a feeling that's a mixture of contempt and superiority. From the main event down to the four-round preliminary I still find them all exciting. Maybe I'm reliving my youth, but I still recognize the experience the boy is going through in the ring and wondering how he'll come out of it—and subconsciously pulling for him.

I don't necessarily see myself in them, either. For instance, I admire Chuck Speiser's disregard for punishment. It isn't the way I'd fight, or would recommend that any other kid fight, but it does give the fellow who pays to be entertained full value received. I was a boxer, not a runner like Willie Pastrano. There's

a difference. I would stand and make a fight in the interests of good showing because, after all, the public interest can't be disregarded. In that connection, I insist that from a technical standpoint, the biggest menace to boxing today is the presence in the ring of such old-timers as Sugar Ray Robinson and Archie Moore.

VETS BAD FOR GAME

Don't arch your eyebrows. I know they still are riding high in their divisions. The point is they don't do anything to advance boxing as a spectacle. To them you can add fellows like Ezzard Charles, Jimmy Carter and the like. Those old fellows retain the defensive skill that can break the heart of a young fighter, yet they can't do anything themselves. Time has robbed them of their power to mount a sustained offensive. For a moment, maybe, a Robinson will flash a knockout punch, but who does he knock out? Bobo Olson? Archie Moore can be dangerous for an instant. But they're all going downhill. There's none of the anticipation and suspense you feel when a young fellow like Floyd Patterson is in the ring.

To me, it's important that the young blood in the game be encouraged, and if you have to get rid of the old-timers just sliding along on their cunning to do it, then do it!

You say there's no way of preventing a man from making a living. I say the boxing commissions have the supervisory authority to see that good matches are made and are empowered to cull out all those who keep the fight game stagnant.

Already great strides have been made since the exposure of such sinister influences as those portrayed in the hard-punching picture, "The Harder They Fall." The supposed connection between the giant in that picture and Carnera has been well publicized. I would like to point out that Carnera became a better than fair boxer during his career in the ring. At least, he learned how to use his feet. I still have seed warts on my toes from where he stepped all over them for 15 rounds that night of March 1, 1934, in Miami, Fla.

A fellow like Carnera was natural for the buildup. Everybody loves the big fellows because in all of us there is the lust for the kill. Heavyweights can put you out with one punch. In the cheapening of this glamor division, I think today's promoters have shown their greatest stupidity. In my day, the little man used to sustain boxing. There was genuine interest in the lightweights

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and the welterweights, or drop down a couple of notches to the flyweights, bantamweights and featherweights.

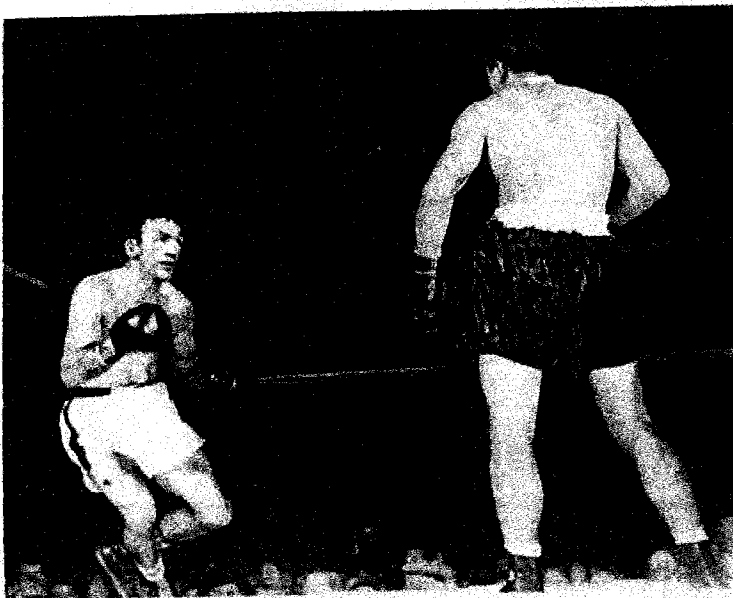
Quick now, name the bantamweight champion of the world. Better yet, tell me the name of the lightweight champ without running to the record book. It wasn't too long ago that Henry Armstrong was one of the great names of boxing. Ross, Ambers, Canzoneri, Singer, Tendler—they were little men who made big news.

Only once in a while did the promoters throw you the biggest plum of all—a battle between ranking heavyweights. When it came, it had impact, it meant something. Today they throw them at you so fast that when they're not quickly eliminating each other they're lost in a bunch of names so that you're not quite sure who belongs to what division, whether Willie Pastrano is a lightweight, heavyweight, or wasn't he a middleweight just a while back.

MARCIANO GREAT

Our current heavyweights don't lack the ability to stir up interest. I've already told you what I thought of Patterson as the potential all-time greatest—at least among those I've seen, and I might remind you that I was a Dempsey sparring partner before his first Tunney fight. By now, it should be clear that Rocky Marciano had a little something extra besides stamina and determination. In his very crudeness as a boxer he was able to protect himself. He rates second only to Demp-

Pound for pound Tony DeMarco ranks with all time punchers says Loughran.



sey in my book. He beat Joe Louis when the latter was an old man, but he would have beaten Joe as a young man, too. Rocky's greatness came from his crudeness. You watch the average boxer. When he throws a left jab or crosses with a right, the body moves but the head remains on the same plane in the classic tradition. Rocky defied all conventions. When he threw a punch every part of him moved. His head, instead of being stationary, became a moving target, bobbing and weaving, and any rifleman can tell you how much more difficult it is to hit a deer in flight than a bullseye nailed down on the firing range. Marciano didn't get hit as much as people presume.

Hurricane Jackson, too casually dismissed as a clown, would have gotten as far in my day as he's done with the present bunch because he's an authentic physical freak. There have been windmill fighters before, but he's the first heavyweight I can recall who used that type of attack without letup. Jackson couldn't penetrate a box of paper tissues. But whoever told you Harry Greb, the most famous exponent of the windmill style, was any slugger? I should be qualified to answer that one, because I fought Greb six times and can personally vouch for the fact that he was not a puncher who could stop you in your tracks with one blow.

What Jackson lacks in class, he makes up in persistence, and so I don't feel it is fair to minimize his accomplishments. He's beaten some good fighters. Hurricane has the edge on most men who step into the ring

with him because they're not prepared physically to stand the gaff. Today's fighters are a product of our softer living. They are the product of an age. Fighters today are quicker. There is more nervous tension in every occupation. Fighters are jumpy and fast. They are not so rugged and don't have the stamina. The automobile and other luxuries have depressed the value of endurance.

SCIENCE AIDS CURRENT FIGHTERS

To compensate for that, today's generation has it all over mine because of the nutritional, scientific and medical strides made in the past quarter of a century. I would be the last to deny the men today are better physical specimens overall, even if lacking the hunger instinct that drove the youth of my time to scale the heights in sport.

For that lack of hunger, too, you can substitute color and personality. A few years ago I was out in Fort Sheridan, Ind. A young boy with the blue of the Irish in his eyes and cast of the Chinese in the slant of his brows approached me. I recognized him as a kid I'd seen that afternoon in amateur bouts held at the camp.

"I want to be a professional boxer, Mr. Loughran," he said. "How do I go about it?"

"What's your name, son, and where you from?"

"Jimmy Soo, and I come from South Philly."

"Well, what do you know? My old neighborhood. Tell you what you do. When you get out of service, go to Mr. Blinky Palermo in Philadelphia. And tell him that Tommy Loughran sent you."

A fellow like Blinky, I feel, is not detrimental to boxing. Too many kids have come along and been destroyed by success. He has encouraged new young kids to come into the sport and financed them. Soo, the latest I read, was still undefeated but having difficulty being matched properly.

Too often the fighter is blamed for a poor bout when it's the matchmaker who's at fault. A fighter can be set down for six months if his performance is considered unsatisfactory. Well, matchmakers are licensed by state athletic commissions and under the same supervisory authority. Instead of penalizing the fighter, I suggest that the matchmaker be barred for six months.

You'd be amazed how quickly the caliber of boxing shows would improve.