

CHUCK HASSON

PHILADELPHIA'S LEW TENDLER-

For many years, when discussing the greatest southpaw boxer of all time, one name was usually at the top of every list- Lew Tendler! Of course in recent years with the resurgence of left-handed boxers, Tendler's position of ~~supremacy~~ supremacy has been challenged by the likes of Marvin Hagler and Pernell Whitaker. Even in Philadelphia some local fistic followers rate Tyrone Everett as the best portsider ever developed in the city. While opinions on this matter may vary one fact remains and that is--Lew Tendler is one of boxing's greatest legends.

Lew Tendler was born on Sept. 28, 1898, and was raised around 6th and Reed. In his youth he was a wiry little guy who was always looking to hustle a buck to help out at home, as times were tough and extra money was hard to come by.

Eventually he became a newsboy, which during this period was a very rugged occupation for a youngster. Philadelphia then had eight daily newspapers and circulation wars were raging across the city. Many papers hired sluggers in order to hawk their sheets at prime corner locations and run off any competitors.

Soon Lew came under the wing of Phil Glassman, an older youth who organized a group of paperboys to combat the sluggers. To Glassman's surprise scrawney Lew became quite proficient at holding a corner. Before long Glassman and Lew both had ideas that maybe his ability to hold a street corner and hawk newspapers was not the extent of Lew's talents. They started thinking that they might make some long green in the boxing game which was flourishing in the city at this time. Philadelphia had seven clubs running successfull weekly boxing shows plus frequent activity in the outlying areas of Camden, Chester, Allentown and Lancaster provided many paydays for a rugged and colorful lad.

Young Tendler knew the only obstacle in his path was that his parents, particularly his mother, had strong objections to "prize-fighting." At first he intended to box on the sly so that his folks would not find out. But after coming home with a few too many bruises and not enough adequate excuses, Lew was soon confronted by his mother who asked "have you been prize-fighting?" As the histrionics continued and Mama Tendler sat down and began to cry, Lew went to her and put ten bucks in her lap. She looked up and said "Lew, Where did you get all this money?" "Fighting Mom," Lew said. Hearing this Mrs. Tendler wiped her eyes, looked at the ten bucks and said "Lew, you are a great son. When is your next fight." And Lew Tendler was on his way.

The non-stop, all action style that Lew used at the beginning of his career quickly caught on with the Philly boxing fans and he became a sensational attraction at all the clubs. Glassman realized that Tendler was something special and he was negotiating Lew's services to the highest bidder. Sell-out crowds were the norm for his bouts at the National A.C. at 11th + Catharine, the Olympia at Broad + Bainbridge and the Broadway which was located at 15th and Washington, Meeting and defeating Philadelphia's legion of top flight bantams and featherweights including Eddie O'Keefe, Benny Kaufman, Louisiana and Young McGovern. Before long Lew became a highly skilled craftsman with a terrific body attack that made him a feared battler.

His first national attention came when he whipped ^{curse} world bantamweight champ Pete Herman at the Olympia. This was during the no-decision period in Philadelphia and all the papers had Lew winning against the great New Orleans scrapper. this prompted the promoters ^{to} begin importing the best talent from around the country, ~~at~~ at a time when there were literally hundreds of top notch performers in the lighter classes. The list of boxers that Lew defeated were like the who's who of his day.

Lew ran up a remarkable record and was virtually unbeatable for a stretch of five or six years and well over a hundred matches. It was far from an easy run though. He had many rugged battles and some close calls. A case in point and one of the most discussed and debated bouts in history was his affair with New York's vicious punching Willie Jackson at Shibe Park, August 11, 1919, for the promotional combine of Herman Taylor and Bobby Gunnis.

Jackson, who was the only man to K.O. the great Johnny Dundee (330 bouts) in a sensational affair at the Olympia in 1917, came out fast against Tendler and caught him cold with thunderous shots dropping him flat on his back and seemingly out to the world. But the fast work and savy of the Glassman corner team which included trainer Scoodles Rhinefeld and the notorious and feared Max "Boo Boo" Hoff (famous as a manager and promoter, and infamous as a bootlegger and rackets boss), ^{SAVED LEW.} Although the versions of this story varied as the years went on, heating up the always inter-city rivalry between New York and Philadelphia, one fact is indisputable. As Tendler lay unconscious in a neutral corner, Hoff rushed over and threw a bucket of water on Lew reviving him so he was able to reach his feet at the count of nine.

The New York contingent screamed bloody murder claiming that referee Pop O'Brien gave Tendler a slow count and then allowed him to recuperate by admonishing his corner that Lew would be disqualified if they ever tried that again. All before he let the contest continue- that was the New York version. The Philadelphians, of course disagreed stating that although they were guilty of throwing the water on Lew, he was able to beat the count and resume the fray and survive the round, and that O'Brien's sermon came as he was counting.

Anyway Lew recovered enough to come back and easily win the remainder of the bout (six rounds). But the controversey lived on for years.

By this time Lew had become a popular attraction all over the country and beat the best local lightweights these cities had. It wasn't long before the national press were writing that Tendler was perhaps the best lightweight in the world. No mean feat when you consider that the champion was Benny Leonard considered to be pound for pound the greatest fighter in the world in an era when champions Jack Dempsey, Harry Greb, Mickey Walker, Johnny Dundee and Pancho Villa ruled their divisions.

Tendler and Glassman began to pressure promoters Taylor and Gunnis to secure a title match for Lew, finally signing Leonard to meet Tendler at Baker Bowl on Aug. 12, 1921. Interest in the match was fantastic and over one hundred thousand dollars was already in the till 3 weeks before the date when Leonard cancelled claiming a broken pinky finger. As the promoters refunded the money the Philadelphia sports world was outraged claiming the injury was a hoax, and fanned the flames of the old New York-Philadelphia rivalry.

As everybody knows the pair was matched again the following year on July 27, 1922 in Jersey City and it became one of the most famous title contests in history, as Leonard "talked Tendler out of the title."

The fight was scheduled for 12 no-decision rounds- meaning that Lew would have stop Benny inside the distance in order to be declared the new champion. He got the chance in the eighth and what followed has been the subject of legend ever since. Lew staggered the champ badly with a terrific shot under the heart. As Benny appeared that he might fall ^{it} ~~he~~ seemed like ^{he} said something to Lew that abruptly stopped his attack and ~~he~~ protested whatever Leonard said. The boxers never reported to the press what was actually said at that critical point but speculation ran wild as many versions were volunteered. Among them were "keep them up, Lew," "that was a good shot, Lew," but our favorite was: Benny said to Lew in Yiddish "that was a good punch, Lew, but if you want to get fresh, i'll get fresh too" and by the time Lew translated the yiddish to english in his mind he had let Leonard off the hook.

Anyway Lew lost his chance and Benny retained his title. He even gave Lew another shot the following year at Yankee Stadium with Leonard winning by a comfortable margin in front of a record lightweight crowd of 58,519.

Lew earned another title shot at Mickey Walker's welterweight championship at the Baker Bowl on June 2, 1924. Unfortunately Mickey's youth and speed were too much and Lew dropped a ten round decision, but he remained a top notch, world class fighter until he retired in 1928.

Lew had 155 bouts in which he lost only sixteen. He met 9 world champions 14 times including Leonard, Herman, Johnny Dundee, Rocky Kansas, Mickey Walker and Joe Dundee. He was stopped only once by Jack Zivic, later avenging this in a Philadelphia Ball Park.

After retirement Lew opened a restaurant at Broad + Locust that became the center of activity for the sporting, entertainment, and political set in Philadelphia. It was a hub of activity drawing tourists and famous celebrities from around the world when they visited the city. Lew was respected and admired by all and they were proud to call him their friend.

Lew Tandler is acknowledged as one of the greatest boxers of all time and possibly the greatest southpaw ever---Maybe even in Philadelphia.....

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LEW TENDLER

1913

11/ 6-Mickey Brown, Broadway A.C.--W 6
 -Johnny McLoughlin, Phila.--ND 6
 -Kidder Burns -----ND 6
 -Freddie Halfig -----KO 4
 -Benny Reilly -----ND 6
 -Neil McCue -----ND 6
 -Kid Goodman, -----ND 6
 -Kid Goodman -----ND 6
 -Mickey Brown -----ND 6
 -Young Brown -----ND 6
 3/16-Harry Woods, Olympia A.C.--W 6
 6/11-Neil McCue, Broadway-----D 6
 7/23-Mickey Brown, Broadway-----D 6
 9/ 1-Young McGovern, Olympia-----W 6
 12/ 1-Pinky Burns, National A.C.--W 6

1915

-Willie Mack -----ND 6
 -Kid Goodman -----ND 6
 3/ 8-Young Diggins, Olympia----TKO 2
 3/22-Jimmy Murray, Olympia-----W 6
 4/12-Barney Snyder, Olympia----KO 4
 4/19-Willie Mack, Olympia-----W 6
 5/ 3-Willie Mack, Olympia-----W 6
 5/24-Louisiana, Olympia-----W 6
 9/24-Battling Reddy, National----D 6
 10/ 1-Young Solzberg, National---ND 6
 10/19-Yg. Jack Toland, Douglas AC-W 6

1916

1/ 1-Willie Brown, Olympia-----W 6
 1/24-Eddie O'Keefe, Olympia-----L 6
 1/31-Eddie O'Keefe, Olympia-----L 6
 2/28-Pete Herman, Olympia-----W 6
 4/ 3-Benny Kaufman, Olympia----L 6
 4/24-Benny Kaufman, Olympia-----W 6
 5/29-Al Shubert, Olympia-----W 6
 10/30-Dick Loadman, Olympia-----W 6
 11/13-Al Shubert, Olympia-----D 6
 12/14-Texas Kid, Baltimore-----W10

1917

2/26-Artie Root, Olympia-----W 6
 3/26-Johnny Dundee, Olympia-----L 6
 8/ 1-Terry McGovern, Shibe Park--W 6
 10/ 1-Johnny Dundee, Olympia-----W 6
 10/29-Rocky Kansas, Olympia-----W 6
 11/29-Frankie McManus, Olympia---W 6
 12/18-Jack Russo, Boston-----KO 5

1918

1/ 7-Willie Jackson, Olympia-----W 6
 1/21-Frankie Callahan, Olympia---W 6
 2/11-Tommy Touhey, Olympia-----KO 4
 3/ 4-Pete Hartley, Olympia-----KO 4
 3/22-Frankie Nelson, Buffalo----KO 4
 3/25-Eddie Wallace, Olympia-----W 6
 4/ 3-Patsy Cline, Olympia-----W 6
 4/20-Terry Brooks, National-----W 6
 4/23-Frankie Britt, Boston-----KO 3
 4/29-Willie Jackson, New Haven---W15
 5/13-Phil Bloom, Olympia-----W 6
 5/30-Vincent Pokorni, Cleveland--W10
 7/ 6-Frankie Callahan, Atlan.Cty.-W 8
 7/16-Patsy Cline, Shibe Park-----W 6
 8/26-Harvey Thorpe, Olympia-----W 6
 9/18-George KO Chaney, National---L 6
 11/ 2-Frankie Callahan, National---W 6
 11/23-Joe Welsh, National-----W 6
 12/10-Frankie Callahan, Boston---TKO 9
 12/16-Ever Hammer, Olympia-----W 6

1919

1/ 1-Rocky Kansas, Buffalo-----W10
 1/20-Young Brown, Olympia-----W 6
 2/ 3-Ralph Brady, Syracuse-----W10
 2/10-Eddie Kelly, Olympia-----W 6
 2/26-Joe Welling, Newark-----W 8
 4/28-Jimmy Duffy, Olympia-----W 6
 5/12-Cal Delaney, Olympia-----W 6
 5/13-Al Murphy, Wilkes Barre-----ND 8
 6/ 4-George KO Chaney, Shibe Pk.-KO 1
 7/14-Joe Welling, Shibe Park-----W 6
 8/ 4-Willie Jackson, Shibe Park--W 6
 10/10-Stanley Yoakum, Denver-----W 4
 10/21-Johnny Noye, Denver-----LF 3
 10/25-Harvey Thorpe, Detroit-----W10
 11/ 8-George Erne, National-----KO 2
 11/22-Charley Pitts, National-----W 6
 11/27-Johnny Noye, National-----KO 2

1920

2/23-Allentown Dundee, Olympia---KO 2
 2/28-Dick DeSanders, National---KO 3
 3/15-Johnny Rose, Olympia-----W 6
 3/20-Johnny Martin, National-----W 6
 3/29-Stanley Hinckle, Olympia---TKO 6
 4/ 5-Tim Droney, Lancaster-----W 6
 4/19-Bandy Sharp, Paterson-----KO 2
 5/ 3-Johnny Tillman, St. Paul----W10

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1920 (cont.)

5/12-George Papin, Jersey City---KO 6
 5/19-Pinky Mitchell, Milwaukee---W10
 5/24-Eddie Fitzsimmons, Shibe Pk.--D 8
 6/ 9-Richie Mitchell, Milwaukee---W10
 7/12-Willie Jackson, Baker Bowl---W 8
 9/18-Frankie Callahan, Lawrence--KO 5
 10/26-Joe Welling, Milwaukee-----ND10
 11/ 8-Eddie Kelly, Olympia-----KO 5
 11/25-Johnny Tillman, National-----W 8
 12/25-Chick Simler, Olympia-----KO 7

1921

1/ 1-Otto Wallace, Olympia-----KO 4
 1/26-Willie Jackson, Milwaukee---W10
 2/28-Sailor Freedman, Milwaukee--ND10
 7/ 4-Tim Droney, Lancaster-----W10
 8/24-Sailor Friedman, Baker Bowl--W 8
 9/13-Sailor Friedman, Baker Bowl--W 8
 10/21-Rocky Kansas, New York City--L15
 11/24-Manuel Azevedo, Olympia-----KO 2
 12/16-Sailor Friedman, New York----W15

1922

1/ 2-Barney Adair, Olympia-----W 8
 2/ 1-Mel Coogan, Olympia-----TKO 1
 2/24-Hymie Gold, New York City---KO 7
 3/11-Johnny Sheppard, Brooklyn---KO 3
 3/13-Alex Hart, Olympia-----W 8
 4/10-Charlie Pitts, New York-----LF 7
 4/17-Tim Droney, Olympia-----W 8
 5/ 5-Johnny Dundee, New York City--W15
 6/ 6-Bobby Barrett, Baker Bowl---KO 6
 7/27-Benny Leonard, Jersey City---L12
 (world lightweight title)
 9/11-Ever Hammer, Baker Bowl-----W 8
 11/ 3-Johnny Mendelsohn, Milwauk.--ND10

1923

1/19-Pal Moran, New York City-----W15
 1/29-Jack Lawlor, Arena-----KO 3
 6/18-Pal Moran, Baker Bowl-----W 8
 6/25-Tim Droney, Allentown-----W10
 7/24-Benny Leonard, New York Cty, L15
 (world lightweight title)
 11/19-Jack Palmer, Arena-----W 8
 12/28-Pep O'Brien, Scranton-----ND10

1924

1/ 1-Nate Goldman, Arena-----L10
 1/28-Ray Mitchell, Adelphia A.C.--W10
 2/18-Pinky Mitchell, Milwaukee---W10
 3/17-Ted Marchant, Adelphia-----KO 4
 4/15-Sailor Friedman, Boston-----W10

6/ 2-Mickey Walker, Baker Bowl----L10
 (world welterweight title)
 7/21-Bobby Barrett, Baker Bowl----D10
 8/18-K.O. Mars, Cincinnati-----W10
 11/24-Joe Libby, 2nd Reg. Armory--W10
 12/25-Joe Tiplitz, Armory-----W10

1925

1/19-Jack Zivic, Pittsburgh-----KOby 5
 2/23-Joe Reno, Arena-----TKO 5
 3/16-Nate Goldman, Arena-----W 6
 4/ 6-Tony Julian, Arena-----KO 5
 6/ 8-Jack Zivic, Shibe Park-----W10
 7/16-Joe Dundee, Shibe Park-----D10

1926

4/19-Joe Reno, Atlantic City-----W 8
 5/ 3-Jack McFarland, Newark-----ND10
 5/19-Don Boyer, Toledo-----KO 7
 5/28-Basil Galiano, Coney Island--W10
 6/25-Georgie Russell, Atlan. C.--KO 6
 6/28-Meyer Cohen, Hartford-----L10
 7/12-Joe Reno, Shibe Park-----W10
 7/29-Mike Forkins, New York City--KO 6
 9/ 1-Joe Reno, Shibe Park-----W10
 10/ 4-Danny Gordon, W. Manayunk----W10
 10/15-Farmer Cooper, New York City--W10
 11/ 1-Tony Jordon, Philadelphia---LF 4

1927

3/15-Yg. Harry Wills, Los AngelesKO 8
 4/12-Ace Hudkins, Los Angeles----L10
 8/ 9-Danny Gordon, W. Manayunk---KO 8
 8/24-Willie Greb, Philadelphia---KO 4
 9/12-Sailor Darden, Municipal St.--W10
 10/ 3-Pat Haley, Arena-----KO 1
 11/ 7-Vincent Forgione, Arena-----W10
 12/12-Hilario Martinez, Arena-----W10

1928

1/2-Jack McFarland, Philadelphia--KO 8
 1/20-Ace Hudkins, New York City---L10
 6/18-Nate Goldman, Shibe Park----KO 5

results from Phila. Record except for early undated fights which are from Ring Record Book. All Pa. bouts are no-decision until Dec. 1923. All New Jersey and Wisconsin bouts no-decision.

Tendler died Nov. 7, 1970, Somers Point, New Jersey.