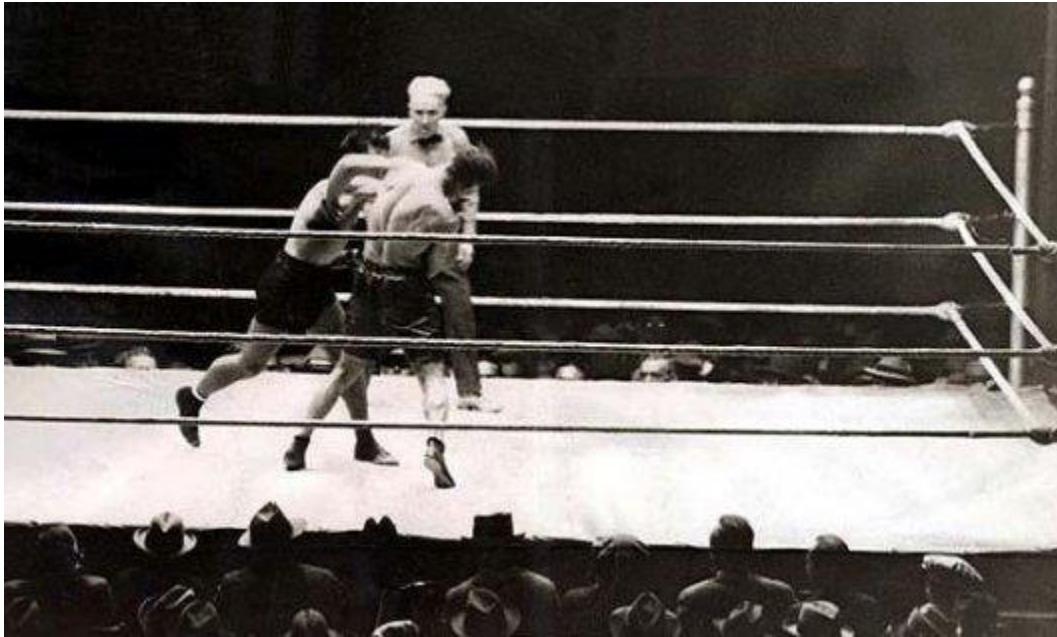


A Shade Unlucky

by Daniel Attias



Shade battled Mickey Walker for the world welterweight title at Yankee Stadium in 1925.

Dave Shade had a successful, lengthy and newsworthy career finishing with a record of 131 wins, 28 losses and 59 draws...

"Sure I beat Mickey. All the newspapermen thought so, but those gamblers took care of that. I carried a large majority of the first 14 rounds, but Mickey had a little the better of it in the 15th. One round shouldn't win a fight."—Dave Shade

Davis J. Walsh of the *International News Service* sat ringside the night Dave Shade battled the "Toy Bulldog," Mickey Walker, for the world welterweight title at Yankee Stadium in the Bronx back in 1925 and he was also of the opinion that Shade deserved the win.

New York – Dave Shade won the welterweight championship here last night from Mickey Walker but the judges and referee deprived the Concord, Calif. fighter of a well earned victory.

Warren Brown of the *Chicago Tribune* as well as numerous other newspaper men who sat ringside were of the same opinion. There were also those who felt Walker had done enough to retain his title, just as many as those who felt Shade deserved the decision, but the record books will forever read Mickey Walker SD Dave Shade.

This wasn't to be the first time Shade had come "oh so close" to being crowned the king of the welters.

He fought the great Jack Britton to a draw in a title bout on the 17th of February 1922 at Madison Square Garden in New York. The fight was a battle of youth versus experience with Shade being just 19 years of age and the champion Britton 18 years his senior at 37.

The fight followed the usual pattern for one where its participants are as equally old as young, with Shade's youthful exuberance being countered by the tempered experience of Britton. The overall feeling from the contest was that Shade took the fight to Britton but the more effective blows came from the champion. *Lewiston Daily Sun* from February 17, 1922 confirms this.

Britton, the boxing master, appeared to have outpunched the challenger in all but four rounds and the verdict of a draw was hooted for several minutes by the crowd as Shade was wild and landed few effective blows.

The youngest of the fighting Shade brothers, led the fighting at every opportunity. He staggered the champion once or twice with rights to the jaw but his attacks following these blows were always smothered by Britton's defense.

The draw was the second between the pair; their first bout which occurred a year earlier ended in the same fashion despite Shade knocking Britton down in the fourth round of the 150-pound non-title fight.

Between the draw with Jack Britton in 1922 and the split decision loss to Walker in 1925, Shade fought Jimmy Jones on July 27, 1923 for the NYSAC world welterweight title and despite knocking Jones down on numerous occasions he lost the bout via decision. It was a close fight but according to all accounts a fair decision.

The fight between the two had been arranged as Shade had been recognized in the state of New York as the welterweight champion after Walker had been stripped of the title, at least according to the New York State Athletic Commission, for failing to put forth his best efforts in a bout with Charlie Nashert, better known as Young Fitzsimmons.

Prior to the title fight against Mickey Walker, Shade knocked out the highly touted light heavyweight Jimmy Slattery in three rounds at the Polo Grounds in New York on July 2, 1925. Slattery was 66-2 at the time and outweighed Shade by almost 11 pounds.

The card was a part of a filmed evening of boxing which included fights between Harry Greb and Mickey Walker, Harry Wills and Charles Weinert, and Jack Sharkey vs Joe Lynch. Fight fans the world over, to this day, still hold hope that the film still exists.

The win was one that elicited excitement amongst the boxing fraternity and which led to Shade's shot at Walker's title. *The Gazette Times* from July 3, 1925 gives us an insight into how Shade impressed that night.

In a feature six-round contest, the bubble that was Jimmy Slattery, the promising Buffalo light heavyweight and heavyweight contender, was rudely burst by Dave Shade of California, a welterweight who has been dogging the footsteps of Walker for a championship engagement. Slattery, highly touted by all ring experts, did not show a thing against the bobbing and weaving style of Shade, and the smaller man completely outclassed him, winning decisively in the third round when Slattery's seconds tossed a towel into the ring after their man had been floored three times on that session.

Dave Shade was once dubbed the 'uncrowned king of the welterweights' in the 1920s. He fought the legendary Mickey Walker on three separate occasions, Jack Britton twice, Pete Latzo twice, as well as other big welterweight names of the 1920s such as Allentown Joe Gans, Eddie Shelvin and Oakland Jimmy Duffy, among others.

The first of his three bouts with Walker occurred on the 21st of November 1921 and the record book will forever read a TKO win for Mickey Walker but it was one of a reported 22 broken hands suffered during his career that actually ended Shade's night on that occasion and was only one of two career stoppages.

He would go on to rematch Walker exactly one month later, winning a newspaper decision before the pair met for the third time in the much talked about title fight. That was to be the last time Shade would fight for a world title.

His career however would continue quite successfully for another ten years, in places such as Australia, England and Argentina as well as all over the United States. He would campaign the rest of his time as a middleweight and occasionally at light heavyweight despite rarely weighing over 160 pounds.

One of his forays into the higher weight classes was against the Hall of Fame light heavyweight Maxie Rosenbloom. They fought twice in 1926, the first fight being another example of Dave Shade losing a close and disputed decision. The fight occurred on June 5, 1926 at the Queensboro Stadium, Long Island City in Queens, New York. *The New York Times* described the decision for Rosenbloom and the dispute over who really won.

The crowd did not take too kindly to the decision. Some of those who saw the fight thought Shade entitled to the decision and were not backward in voicing their disapproval. Opinion among the ringside critics also was divided, some thinking Shade won, others favoring Rosenbloom, while many thought the draw should have been the verdict.

In 1927, Jack Dempsey employed Shade to help the ex-champion with his bobbing and weaving prior to his attempt at regaining the heavyweight championship. *The Miami News* from July 2, 1927 reported on the addition of Shade to Dempsey's inner circle.

Jack Dempsey believes the way back to the heavyweight throne leads through the midribs of the two men who bar the path – Jack Sharkey and Gene Tunney.

In the back of the former champion's mind today lies a picture of the rushing, weaving, two-handed puncher who crashed his way to the world crown mainly through terrific body blows. To bring that picture to reality, Dempsey has carefully planned every days' workout up to the time he must climb through the ropes and face Sharkey, first of these obstacles, in the Yankee Stadium July 21.

The first move in the program brought Dave Shade to Dempsey's bungalow on the shores of Saratoga Lake Friday. The California welterweight, one of the cleverest weaving fighters, will act more as a coach than a sparring partner in aiding Jack to work back into his former fighting style.

"I need Shade to show me what is wrong with the way I weave," the former champion said Friday. "You know how it is when one of your golf shots is off you can't tell what has happened. You watch someone else do it right and bingo – it's back again.

Shade had a unique fighting style; he fought out of a crouch so low his chin was near impossible to hit. As one pundit had claimed his chin was closer to the floor than his ankles. His own explanation of his style was that he was "short-legged and long waisted." Whatever the case, it made it a tough ask for opponents to hit him cleanly and when he combined his excellent bobbing and weaving skills with such a low crouch he was a hard man to beat and baffled many a veteran of the prize ring.

Shade fought on in the United States against many of the countries top middleweight contenders, winning the vast majority of fights over the next two years before his first trip abroad.

On the 30th of April 1929, he fought the Cuban middleweight Kid Charol at the Parque Romano in Buenos Aires, Distrito Federal, Argentina. Charol, who previously had beaten the great Panama Joe Gans a few years prior, was given the decision, but once again, Shade had claims to being the victor. *The New York Times* reported via Associated Press that the crowd had thought Shade had won handily.

Dave Shade, American middleweight, and Kid Charol of Cuba fought twelve rounds to a draw here last night. The official decision drew a storm of 'boos' from ringside spectators, who seemed to think Shade had won by a large majority. Shade was the aggressor throughout and had the Cuban in distress several times.

The wins piled up after Shade returned to America but he had trouble convincing the biggest names to commit to fighting him and he travelled to England where he took on two English greats in Jack Hood and Len Harvey.

He fought Harvey on the 29th of September 1929 at the Royal Albert Hall in Kensington, London and once again Shade would draw the short end of the stick regarding the decision. *The Montreal Gazette*, via Associated Press confirms this.

Dave Shade, former California middleweight, lost a fifteen-round decision tonight to Len Harvey, British champion, in Albert Hall.

There was some booing when the verdict was announced, some of the spectators evidently believing Shade was entitled to no worse than a draw.

He drew twice in his tough encounters with Jack Hood but most reports point to both being fair verdicts.

There would be a further five years of fighting for Shade, he won all but a few fights and was once again the victim of some poor decision making.

He travelled to Australia in 1933 taking on the Australian light heavyweight and heavyweight champion Ambrose Palmer in his first fight in the country. Palmer won the fight and what was to be customary for a large number of Shade's losses; the crowd disagreed with the verdict. *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported that "the decision did not find favour with the majority of the spectators."

Shade won a return bout with Palmer thanks to a low blow disqualification and split a pair of fights with Australian middleweight champion Fred Henneberry during his time down under before returning to the United States where he finished up his career a year later in 1935.

Dave Shade had a successful, lengthy and newsworthy career finishing with a record of 131 wins, 28 losses and 59 draws. He was stopped only twice in his 17-year career, a broken hand stoppage against Mickey Walker and a knockout loss in just his ninth professional fight.

One must wonder how it all may have turned out had many of his disputed losses been given as wins. He was worthy of another title shot following his close calls in the '20s in the welterweight division but by that stage he had all but outgrown the weight class. His time spent as a middleweight was long and prosperous but he more often than not was the victim of many a poor decision.

A shade unlucky he certainly was.