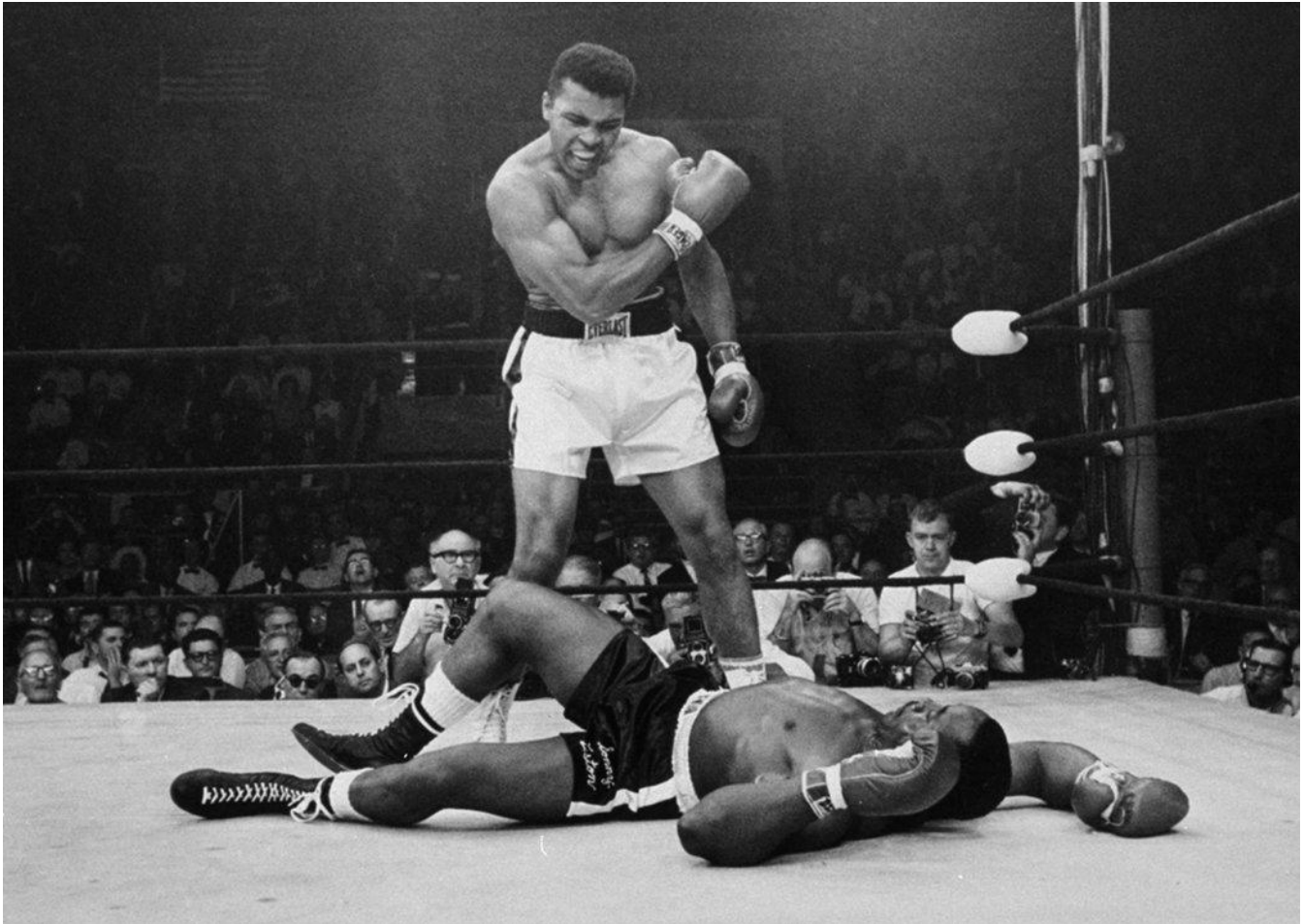


Clay Knocks Out Liston in One Minute; Bout, Like First, Ends in Controversy



Cassius Clay stands over Sonny Liston after knocking him down in the first round of their heavyweight championship fight in Lewiston, Me. Joe Walcott is the referee. Associated Press Wirephoto

BY ROBERT LIPSYTE
Special to The New York Times

LEWISTON, Me., May 25—Cassius Clay retained the heavyweight championship tonight when he knocked out Sonny Liston in the first round of their rematch in the schoolboy hockey arena here.

Radio and television observers timed the knockout at 1 minute 42 seconds, but Maine boxing officials said it came at one minute. However, the bout, which slipped from the control of Jersey Joe Walcott, the referee, was not de-

clared over until 2 minutes 17 seconds had elapsed. Clay and Liston actually squared off to fight again after it was over.

It will be listed as the fastest knockout on record in a heavyweight title bout, but some of the 4,280 spectators yelled "Fake, fake, fake!" Many were as angered by the controversial ending as were those who witnessed the confusing finish of their first bout 15 months ago.

The punch—a short right hand—that sent the 215¼-

pound Liston to the canvas for the first time in his career did not seem to have knockout power.

It all happened something like this:

Clay, weighing 204 pounds, leaped out at the opening bell, skipping forward in his high white shoes, his 8-ounce red gloves far in front of him.

He connected immediately with a right to Liston's head, then a left. Liston seemed to

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shake off the blows, as the crowd, for once, cheered for him.

For what seemed longer than the official 48 fighting seconds, Clay danced around Liston, counter-clockwise, jabbing him lightly, once more connecting with a solid right. Then he fired the short right and missed with a left hook as Liston sagged to his knees.

Liston collapsed slowly, like a falling building, piece by piece, rolling onto his back, then flat on his stomach, his face pressed against the canvas. Clay danced around him, waving at him, taunting him.

Walcott, once the heavyweight champion, tried to wave Clay to a neutral corner. In doing so, he apparently lost the knock-down count being made by Francis McDonough across the ring.

As Walcott turned and leaned toward McDonough, Liston began to climb heavily to his feet.

Count Goes On

McDonough, a retired Portland printer, continued to count as Liston got back up to his knees, then went down again. McDonough reached the count of 12 before he and Walcott made contact.

By then, Liston was up again, squaring off with Clay and ready to fight. Walcott, confused, rushed across the ring and grabbed Clay. He held up Clay's arm, and Clay's entourage poured into the ring.

Liston merely dropped his hands to his sides and stood impassively.

Few in the sparse crowd in the cement-block Central Maine Youth Center realized what had happened.

The immediate confusion was much like that of the night in Miami Beach when Clay won the title. For six rounds that night Clay outboxed Liston, bobbing out of range of long left hooks.

He opened a cut under Liston's left eye, but did not seem to do too much real damage to the so-called "ugly bear," who had twice scored one-round knockouts over Floyd Patterson.

Liston Stayed in Corner

But Liston never answered the bell for the seventh, remaining on his stool as the Miami crowd leaped, screaming, to its feet. Later, Liston said he had injured his left arm in the first round and was unable to use it.

Tonight there was the same kind of consternation. As the crowd surged forward against a cordon of state and city policemen -- some yelling "Fix! Fix!"—Clay stood against the blue velvet ropes, telling the fans to "shaddup," telling them that his victory was a triumph of the "righteous life."

He said the winning blow was the "anchor punch," the secret weapon of the late Jack Johnson, taught to Clay by Stepin Fetchit, the 73-year-old comedian and old-time movie actor now in Clay's entourage.

The punch, said Clay, is part karate, part corkscrew.

Liston said the punch did not hurt him as much as other punches had in his life, but it caught him high on the right cheekbone. Walcott, swamped by his first major refereeing assignment, said the winning punch was a left to the jaw and that it was followed by a right to the body.

"It was the easiest payday I ever had," Clay yelled from the ring. "I told you I had a surprise."

He had, indeed, said through the final days of training that he had a surprise. But he had refused to make a prediction because, he said, people might have thought the fight was fixed when his prediction came true.

Relaxed Through Week

He had been supremely relaxed, even through a week of rumors that Black Muslim defectors were en route from New York to kill him in revenge for the murder of Malcolm X. The rumor grew stronger when two New York City homicide detectives arrived here and said that several of the defectors were "missing from their usual haunts."

Clay, guarded by several Black Muslims, maintained that the rumors had no effect on him, but were scaring Liston. Clay seemed always to be thinking past tonight's bout toward his next—with Floyd Patterson. "that Rabbit, with a habit of getting knocked out."

More Muslims, from Boston and New York, joined city, county, state and Federal officers scanning the crowd as it came in tonight. The Muslims also took pictures of the policemen, who were searching women's handbags and all packages and suitcases.

Clay, a member of the Black Muslim sect, went into the ring wearing a robe bearing his Muslim name: Muhammad Ali. He was introduced from the ring by that name.

Under Maine rules, Walcott would have had no vote had the bout gone to a decision. Three judges arrive at the verdict. The judges, all from Maine, were Joe Bovin, Russ Leonard and Coley Welch.

In one preliminary bout, Mike Bruce, 192½, of Westfield, Mass., outpointed Freddie Brown, 206½, New York, in six rounds.

Rudy Clay, the champion's brother who goes by the name of Ramanthan Ali, knocked out Buster Reed, 174½, of Louisville, Ky., in 58 seconds of the second round of a scheduled six-rounder. Clay weighed 186.

Joe Turnbow, 203, of Paterson, N. J., outpointed Cody Jones, 209, of Detroit, in six rounds.

Jim Ellis, 176, of Louisville, Ky., won by a technical knockout in 1:04 of the first round over Joe Blackwood, New York, in a scheduled six-rounder.

New York Times

May 26, 1965

WHAT I SAW, WHAT I DID, AT LEWISTON

By NAT FLEISCHER

“THE Battle of Confusion” took place in St. Dom’s Youth Center in Lewiston, Me., which, like the shot at Lexington that was heard around the world, created an international uproar.

Cassius Clay, holder of the world championship, retained his crown by knocking out Sonny Liston, former title holder, in one minute of the first round. This to the utter amazement of those around the ringside and the millions who saw the fight on closed circuit TV in our country, and via the Early Bird satellite in other parts of the world.

What made this fight so confusing, so unacceptable to the public, and created so bad an impression were the many factors that aroused the fans to ire. Cries of “Fake, Fake, Fake” from onlookers, and charges of collusion created a situation that once again has brought the introduction of bills to create a National Commissioner of Boxing.

I sat next to the knockdown timekeeper and had a clear view of the happenings.

Let me here go on record with the statement that there was no “Invisible” punch. There was a blow that definitely landed, and reporters who say there was no punch are dead wrong.

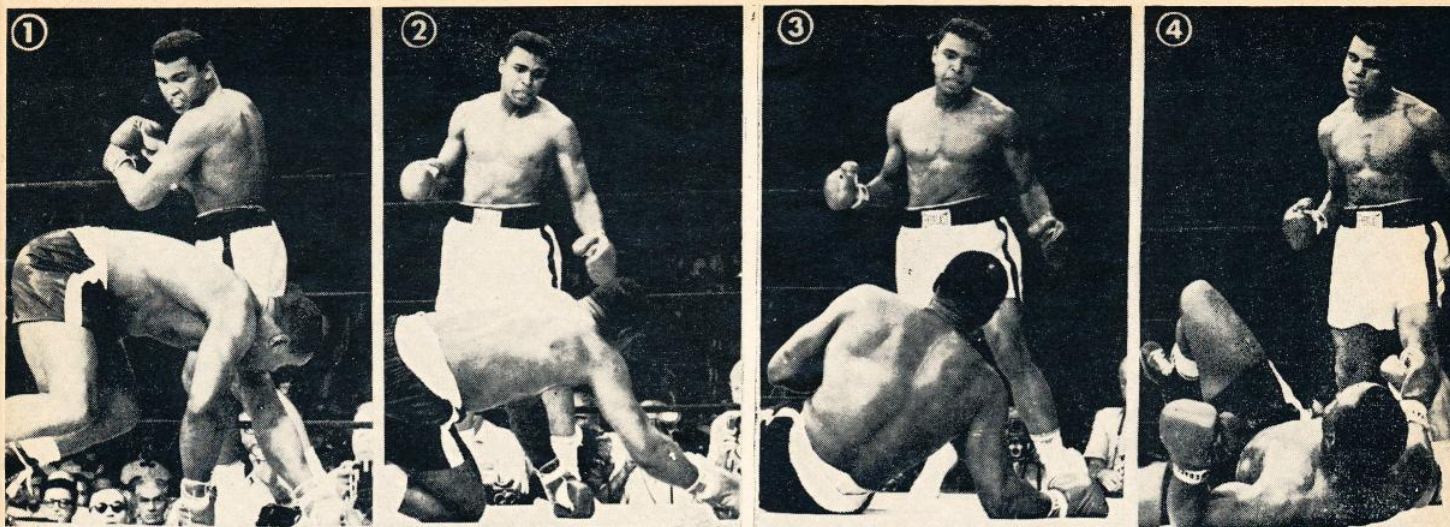
The slow motion movies shown after the fight, clearly prove that a short right hand blow, a sort of cork-screw punch, landed on the left part of Liston’s cheek. That is the punch that so many persons called a “phantom punch”, though it clearly struck home. How hard a blow? Only Liston knows.

Accustomed to seeing major contests over the past sixty years, I must state that I was as much surprised as were the spectators to think that the oak-thewed giant challenger could be toppled with a thud from what might well be described as a “one punch” knockout. He dropped prostrate from an apparently far from devastating punch, one seemingly not sufficiently powerful to put to the canvas a 215¼ pound hulk.

Liston, as he declared after the fight, had been hit by far more powerful wallops by Cleveland Williams, had taken more punishment without batting an eye and had stood upright through many tougher exchanges with spar mates, buckled under the impact of one right hander that didn’t even land flush on the jaw, but hit him sideways. It will be recalled that when Sonny fought Marty Marshall, Sonny’s jaw was broken. Yet he fought on to the last round.

That is the situation that quickly developed the chaos, the charges, the wild scenes that made of this affair an international rhubarb. The once postponed, rescheduled fight that had been chased by the Attorney General out of Massachusetts to

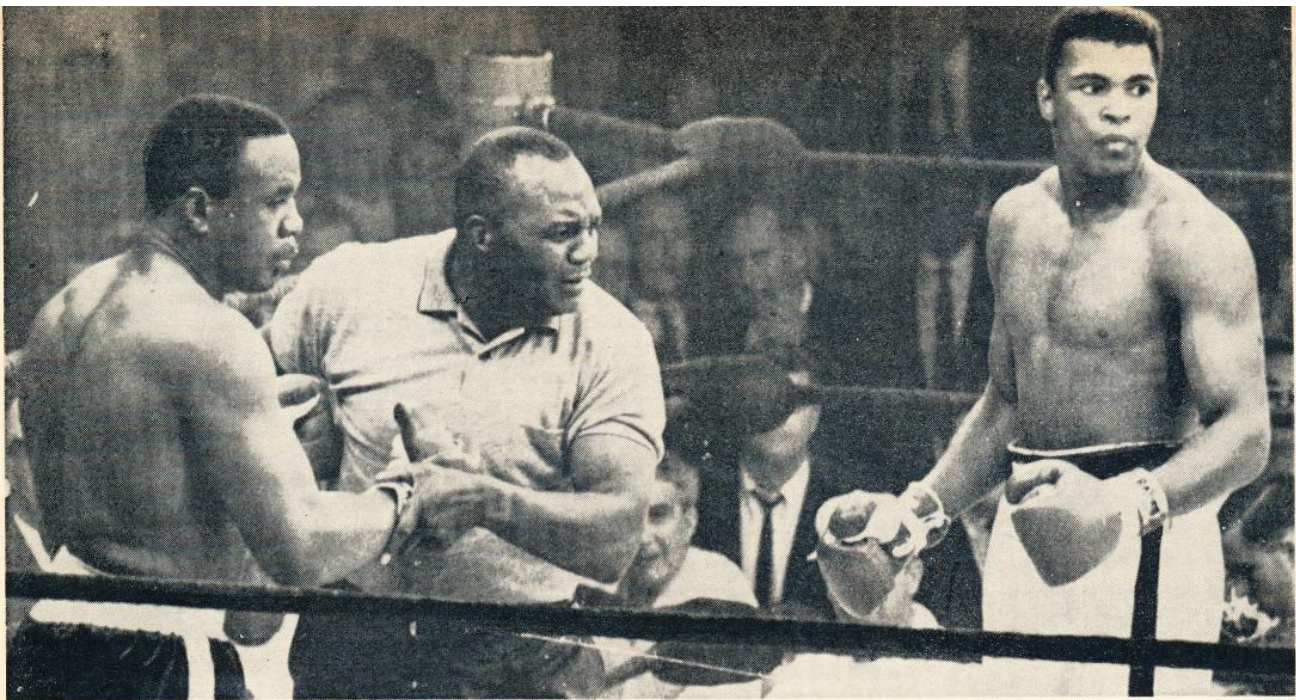
THE RING



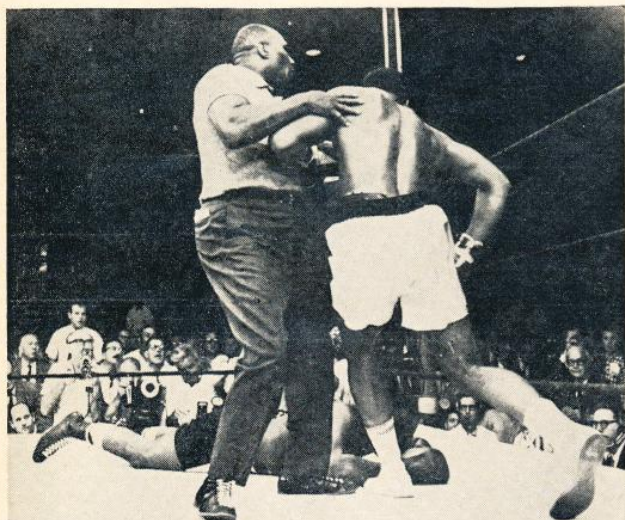
This strip of four shots represents the crux of the action in the title fight. From the left, we see (1), Cassius just has landed a right to the head and Sonny is down. In (2), Liston tries to rise but appears to be too stunned. In (3), Liston continues befuddled and in (4) he is flat on his back, while Referee Jersey Joe Walcott fails in his duty of chasing Cassius into a neutral corner.

Below, the man who twice stopped Floyd Patterson is on his back, his first such experience. An enraged Clay stands over him and shouts, "Get up and fight!" But the loser is not getting up and he is not fighting any more that night. When told that he had been knocked out Liston made no outcry. It was almost as if he had said, "So what?" Sonny didn't add too much more to that after the bout, either.





A highly critical moment. Referee Jersey Joe Walcott looks more worried than Liston or Clay. They are looking to timekeeper Frank McDonough, who tells him that Liston has been knocked out in record time for a heavyweight title bout.



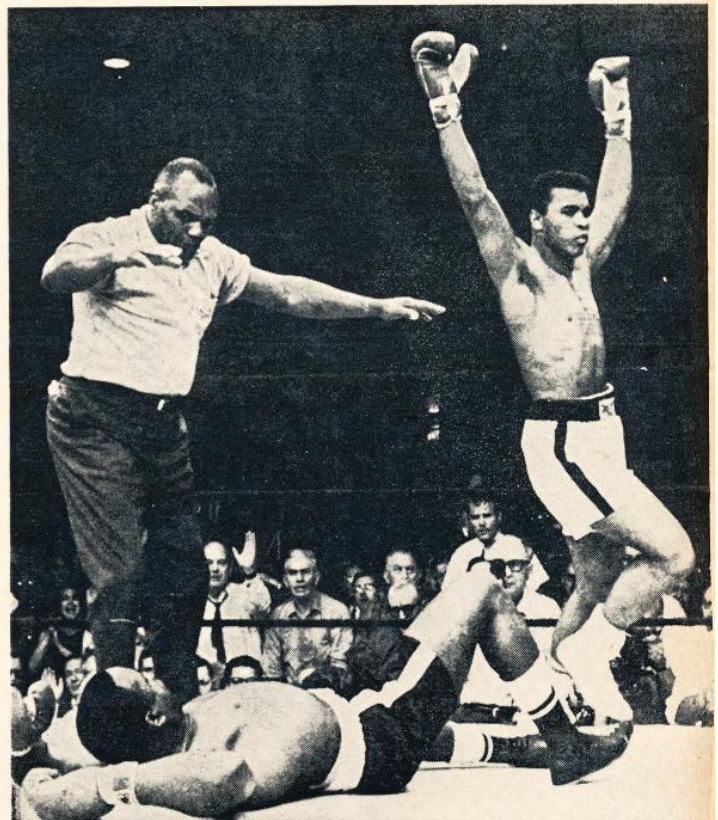
Charley is flat on his stomach. He has been knocked down. Referee Walcott is trying to persuade Clay to go to a neutral corner but the champion just will not go, an action for which he was in danger of disqualification.

Lewiston, Maine, and was accepted there with the blessings of the governor of that state, was bungled from start to finish.

Officials who were lax in the rules of boxing, a referee who by his own admission lost control of the fight and brought about the final act in the state of confusion, the failure of the commission, untrained in the handling of a world championship bout, to have a microphone at the ringside, especially a heavyweight title match, were responsible factors.

Had a microphone been available for knockdown timer Frank McDonough, a retired Portland, Maine, printer, so that Referee Walcott could have been appraised of the count as he struggled with Clay to go to a neutral corner, the subsequent happenings would not have taken place.

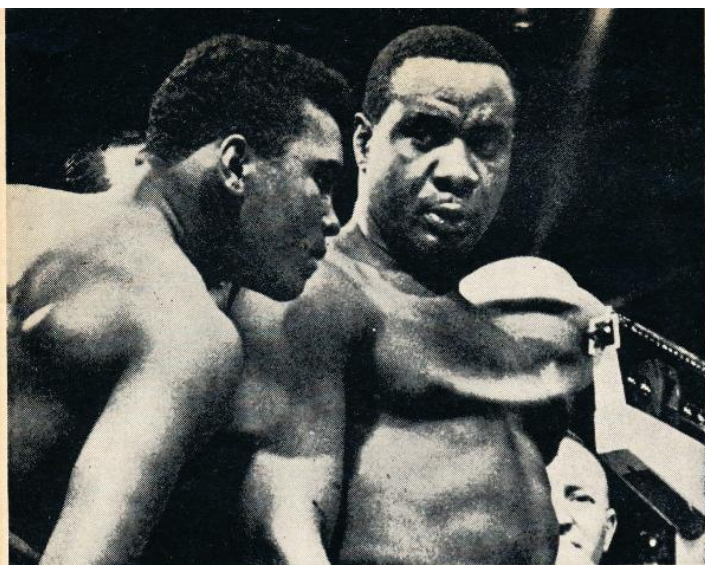
As things turned out, all McDonough had was a gavel and while he did, contrary to statements of many of the reporters, bang away while counting, the din around the ringside, the



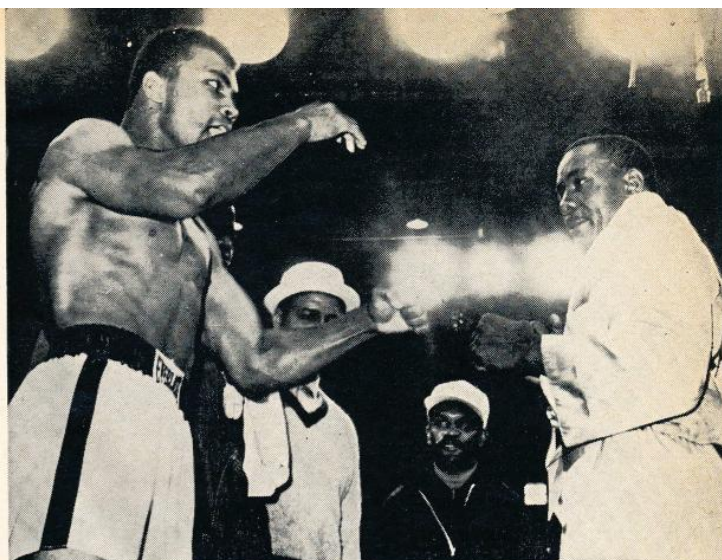
Walcott waits for Liston to get up. Clay assumes that the fight is over and goes into his Cherokee war dance. Sonny appears quite comfortable.

loud cries of "fake" that rent the air, prevented anyone except those close to him from hearing the bangs on the table.

He first counted ten and shouted "out", then continued to let his watch run two more seconds, then didn't stop until it reached the twenty mark, when he halted.



The scene in the little arena at Lewiston goes back to the afternoon, when the fighters weighed in. First it was announced that Liston tipped the beam at 219½. He protested that he was not so heavy. The scales were readjusted and then it was found that his correct poundage was 215¼. Clay weighed 206. Both weighed less than in their first bout.



Clay could not resist the chance to do a bit of clowning with Liston at the weighing in. Note that Sonji is prepared to punch if Cassius got too gay. Too bad Sonji did not deliver a few whacks and make up for his inactivity that night in less than one round of official action.

I watched him. I saw what had happened, and knew that Liston actually had been down for twenty seconds.

Just before Liston got to his feet, Walcott, for the first time during this chaotic situation, turned toward the knockdown timer and waved him over and requested me to do likewise.

It was only then that Walcott had faced the knockdown timer who told him, "I counted him out twice. I counted twelve the first time, then up to twenty. He's out."

Walcott, befuddled, unable to make a decision he should have made since Clay had disobeyed the "Neutral corner" rule, rushed toward the center of the ring where Clay and Liston had resumed the fight while Walcott was conferring with the official. Walcott raised the hand of Clay and declared that Cassius had won by a knockout.

Asked whether he had stopped the fight, he replied, "No, the timer counted him out".

Thus for the first time in the history of championship boxing, the timer, not the referee, who had sole charge of the ring, declared a fighter the winner by a knockout although that sole prerogative belongs to the referee. Several reporters declared that I, not an official, had stopped the fight.

Nothing like that took place. I merely aided in bringing

The Clays, Cassius and bride Sonji, are jubilant after it is all over. Sonji was dressed for a Metropolitan Opera House opening night.



Walcott over to the official knockdown timer at his request, since he couldn't get Jersey Joe's attention. The 67-year-old official was hemmed in at the ringside and couldn't get up to announce to Joe that Liston had lost by a knockout. It was a bungled promotion from the outset. The only capable man in the outfit was Harold Conrad, but he had no say in the choice of officials or arrangements the Maine Commission had to make. That was its job and its members, inexperienced in the handling of such a gigantic task, especially with only one week's time following the transfer from Boston, lost control.

The fight fans couldn't believe that a fighter, never before downed, could be placed in such a prostrate condition as was Liston from one side shot to the cheek bone.

It certainly was not a devastating blow or a thunderous one that could be heard around the ringside, and the jeers that followed clearly testified to the attitude of those who felt they had been bilked.

Liston sank to the canvas on one knee, rolled on his back, returned to the one knee position, then fell over and lay on the canvas like one hit with a rifle shot.

The taunts of the fans followed and reports from all theatres where the fight was shown, told of wild, in some cases, tumultuous, scenes as irate spectators demanded the return of their money.

Jack London, in his report of the match in Sydney, Australia, between Jack Johnson and Tommy Burns in 1908, sent back word to the *New York Herald*:

"The fight? There was no fight," We can also say this of the latest blow to the sport.

It was an affair, however, that set many records—the smallest paid crowd in the history of the division since the modern era got under way; the first in which the referee had no vote; the first in which a timekeeper, not the referee, decided the issue; and the first since the Johnson-Jeffries match in which the fight was chased to another state by government officials.

Now, the matter of the time of the imbroglio. The official timer has said that the fight lasted one minute. The people who took the movies for the TV say it was 1.48. I say it was 1.42—1.32 plus ten seconds, by my watch.

The television people, who have adopted an unusually possessive attitude toward all facts having to do with the mess, and a few factors having nothing whatever to do with it, have insisted that the official time be changed to 1.48.

However, the records will continue to say that this fight lasted just sixty seconds.