

# "SUGAR" RAY'S RING MASTERY STANDS OUT

*Weight Ordeal and Kid Gavilan's Rushing Tactics Fail to Cheek Robinson—Gives Great Exhibition in Retaining World Welterweight Title*

By "THE RING" EDITOR

**S**UCCESS marked the fourth defense of the world welterweight title by Ray Robinson in his return engagement with Kid Gavilan, and with it, Sugar Ray displayed one of the finest brands of boxing seen in a championship match in many moons. Although the champ has lost much of what made fight critics call him the greatest battler of the era in any weight division, he still carried enough of his skill and punch to enable him to come through with the unanimous decision at the Municipal Stadium of Philadelphia before a gathering of 27,805 paying fans, who put into the box office the sum of \$175,754.

It was a masterful exhibition, the best the wearer of the crown has put forth in any of the contests in which his title has been at stake, and by his splendid performance, Sugar Ray proved that he can still make the welterweight limit, tough though it is on him, and retain much of the qualities that have made him one of the best fighting machines of the past quarter century.

It was not a contest of many thrills. But for those who like to see a skillful exhibition, Robinson obliged. The battle was sufficiently stirring to keep the spectators on edge from start to finish. Ray furnished the clever portion of the mill and his opponent, the aggressiveness, which, though not as effective as was the display of all-around ability of the champion, met with the approval of the gathering. Ray paced himself beautifully.

There were many dissenters in the crowd, particularly among the great number of Cubans, many of whom had made a special trip from Havana to back their man—and support him they did with plenty of dough. But there could be no doubt about the winner. Referee Charley Daggert, who did a good job as third man in the ring, gave it nine to six rounds in favor of the title holder. So did one of the judges, Harry Lasky, while the other judge, Frank Knarsborough, seemed far off the beam when he turned in a score of twelve rounds to three for Ray.

The fight was far closer than that. My card showed Robinson the winner, eight rounds to five, with two even.

**G**AVILAN proved himself a fearless, two-fisted, determined battler, who, regardless of the blows landed on him, kept coming in at all times ready to mix it when the opportunity presented itself. But while he was sufficiently active to make

things most interesting for Ray, he was not as effective. Many of his punches landed on the elbows or back, and a number hit the ozone as wild swings, and while this was going on, his opponent used his jabs and hooks to good advantage. That Gavilan was far better than any of the opponents Robinson had met since

he gained the crown cannot be denied, but it takes more than courage to overcome the skill of the champ and the paralyzing punch of Sugar Ray. Gavilan's blows were weak in comparison to those of his opponent, though several times he did shake up the title holder.

Despite the one-sided score of the officials and many of the scribes, the contest was a most interesting and satisfying one. Gavilan's performance was such as to make Ray admit that he feared to take chances. In the fourth round Sugar Ray suffered a cut over the right eye that bled throughout the bout and Robinson was afraid that this might be opened to such extent that the medical advisor to the boxing commission would interfere. But he was fortunate in that the cut didn't widen any after that session.

The Cuban ripped and slashed at his opponent in every round. There was no let-up in his aggressiveness, but aggressiveness alone cannot win a fight against a man who possesses all the ring assets of Sugar Robinson, a champion who, from the start of his pro career, has proved that he belongs with the aces of pugilism in the Fistic Hall of Fame.

Gavilan's plunges were responsible for the high score rolled up by Ray because he

played right into the hands of the defending champion by the very style he employed against Robinson. He never stopped trying, however, and that's what made a good fight of it.

**I**F stamina and courage alone could win a title, then Gavilan would have won it from Robinson. The combative welterweight from Camaguey, Cuba, who has never been knocked out, demonstrated his ruggedness against his 28-year-old veteran opponent as has no other fighter done against Ray with the exception of Jake LaMotta, whom Ray has licked four times out of five. Robinson has rolled up 96 victories in a professional career that shows only that one defeat (which Jake handed out to him) and two draws. Ray blocked Gavilan's rushes, countered brilliantly and cleverly with sharp, accurate lefts that often



*One of the most important features of the Robinson-Gavilan title meeting was not displayed in the ring. It was at the weighing-in ceremonies in the afternoon, with Commissioner John W. Montgomery in charge of the scales. While the Cuban stands by in open-mouthed amazement, Sugar smiles happily as he learns he has just "made" the class limit, 147 pounds, without an ounce to spare. Making the weight was supposed to have been Robinson's biggest problem, but the champion did it without weakening himself to any noticeable extent.*

drilled the Kid's mouth, but no matter how often the Cuban was stunned, he came back to fight his man, on several occasions, even winning the round with his flurries.

After rolling up a tally that made him feel he was safe, Robinson let up and coasted through several of the late rounds, especially the 11th and 12th. In these he found Gavilan ready to take advantage of the let-up to smother the champion with lefts and rights and take the rounds. But in the final three frames the champ showed at his best. He decided that he had paced himself properly for the distance and let go in a manner that was a reminder of the Sugar Ray of past years, the master technician.

He used everything he had in such convincing manner that the spectators realized that only a knockout could win the title for Gavilan. Only the Cuban reporters and those who wagered heavily on the Kid thought otherwise.

**I**N the 14th, though Ray won the session, he gave Gavilan an opportunity to gain the cheers of his followers when he remained against the ropes for almost a minute and permitted the Kid to let go a volley which ringsiders noticed did little damage, but which those in the grandstand seats figured to be most effective. Ray weaved his head, his guard down, and let most of the volley strike the air or his shoulders.

But after that volley was over, the champ took command again. He opened up in the 15th with everything he had and for a time it appeared that the Cuban might be dropped, so effective was the defending title holder's attack. He staggered the Kid with a left hook to the jaw and followed with a beautiful uppercut that almost took the Cuban off his feet. Ringsiders could hear the groans of the Cuban reporters as the blow landed.

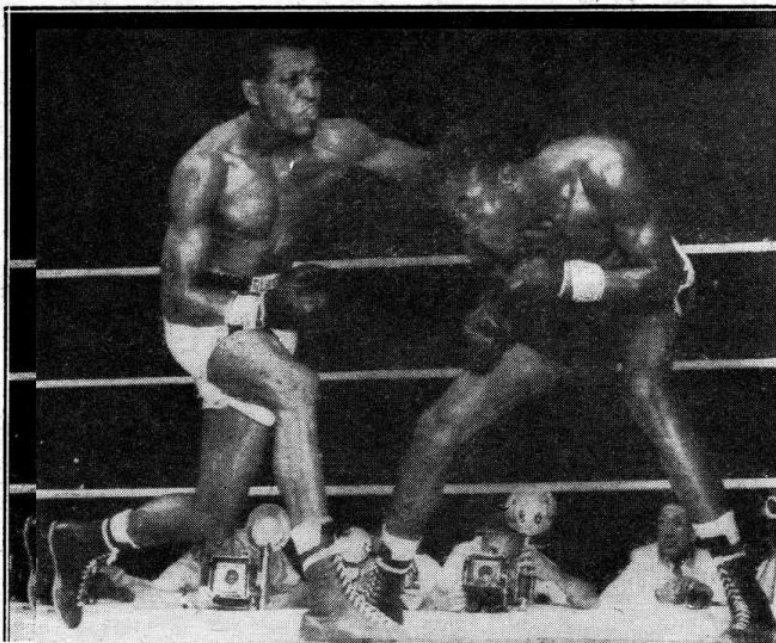
Then came a straight left that crashed flush on Gavilan's jaw and again the Cuban was shaken by the punch. That round was Ray's best, a finish which was quite unexpected because of the difficulty the champ had in making weight. He tipped the beam at exactly 147, the top limit of the division, as against 144½ for his opponent.

**I**N the first six rounds it was anybody's fight. The challenger gave as much as he received and for a time had the champ's manager, George Gainford, worried. But after the sixth, there was no doubt about Ray not only being able to carry on for the full 15 sessions if necessary, but holding his own against the sturdy attack of his incoming opponent.

Contrary to expectations, it was Gavilan and not Sugar Ray who showed first signs of tiring from the fast pace set, and it was only after Ray became aware of it that he opened up on the Cuban. The lost art of feinting—an art made famous by Jack Johnson—was seen to such extent in Robinson's display that I don't recall a fight in recent years when such excellent feinting was on display. He used shoulders, hands and feet in getting his opponent out of position, and then blasted his face with straight jolts and hooked with precision to the body.

**N**EITHER was much marked when the fight was over. Ray's cut eye was all he had suffered in injuries and the Cuban had a bruised face and was bleeding from the nose. He suffered more through the decision, it seemed, than he did from Ray's fists, judging by the dejected look of the Kid as he left the ring with tears in his eyes, his chance to carry back to Cuba a crown he was certain he would win, having been lost through superior craftsmanship of the title holder.

The Cuban tried to bull Ray in the early rounds in an attempt to capitalize on his supposed weakness due to weight reduction, but Robinson, though his bones showed clearly, like that of a



*Kid Gavilan's bobbing, switch-style bothered Robinson at times, but Sugar Ray usually came through with the right answers. Waging a smart, heady battle all the way, the welterweight champion used an effective left hook and right counter to offset the busy, aggressive, two-handed punching of the Cuban challenger. Robinson is seen here as he drops in a left hook to Gavilan's weaving head, and has his right hand ready to follow up with an uppercut.*

human skeleton, so fine had he reduced, displayed no physical weakness. But Ray admitted after the battle that he would like to steer clear of his title and enter the higher class if he could be assured a title bout with Jake LaMotta.

"It's beginning to tell on me," he remarked. "Two years ago I would have knocked out an opponent if I had him in the condition I had Gavilan in the 15th round, but age and weight have crept up on me. Coming in at 147 pounds is a task."

There were no knockdowns. The fourth was the Cuban's best frame, and the 15th, Robinson's best.

**I**T'S an old saying that a boy should never be sent on a man's errand, and by the same token, an amateur has no right trying to handle a professional job. Of thousands of boxing shows we've attended through the years, we cannot recall a more bungled or mismanaged one than the Ray Robinson-Kid Gavilan affair in Philadelphia's Municipal Stadium. The working press section was a mess of confusion, and after scrambling all over the premises for their seats, the legitimate newspapermen had to labor among a lot of "outsiders" who cluttered up the place.

Crowded in against a couple of members of THE RING staff was a party of men and women who probably had never seen a fight before. One of the men, trying to act as though he knew what it was all about, apparently had never heard of mouthpieces. When the bout started, he remarked: "Robinson must have something wrong with his mouth; look at all the wax he is using." At the close of the second round, he said: "They haven't started to fight yet. Two rounds gone, and nobody's bleeding."

One of the worst messes in connection with the show was the unholy tangle in the automobile parking lots. There was no semblance of order or system there; with thousands of cars jammed in, it was everybody for himself, and Lord help the hindmost.

There was no excuse for it all. Big-time boxing is nothing new in Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania metropolis is one of the "oldest" fistic centers in the nation. The trouble with this particular show was that there was no experienced promoter running it. Instead, it was an outfit attempting its first major outdoor card.

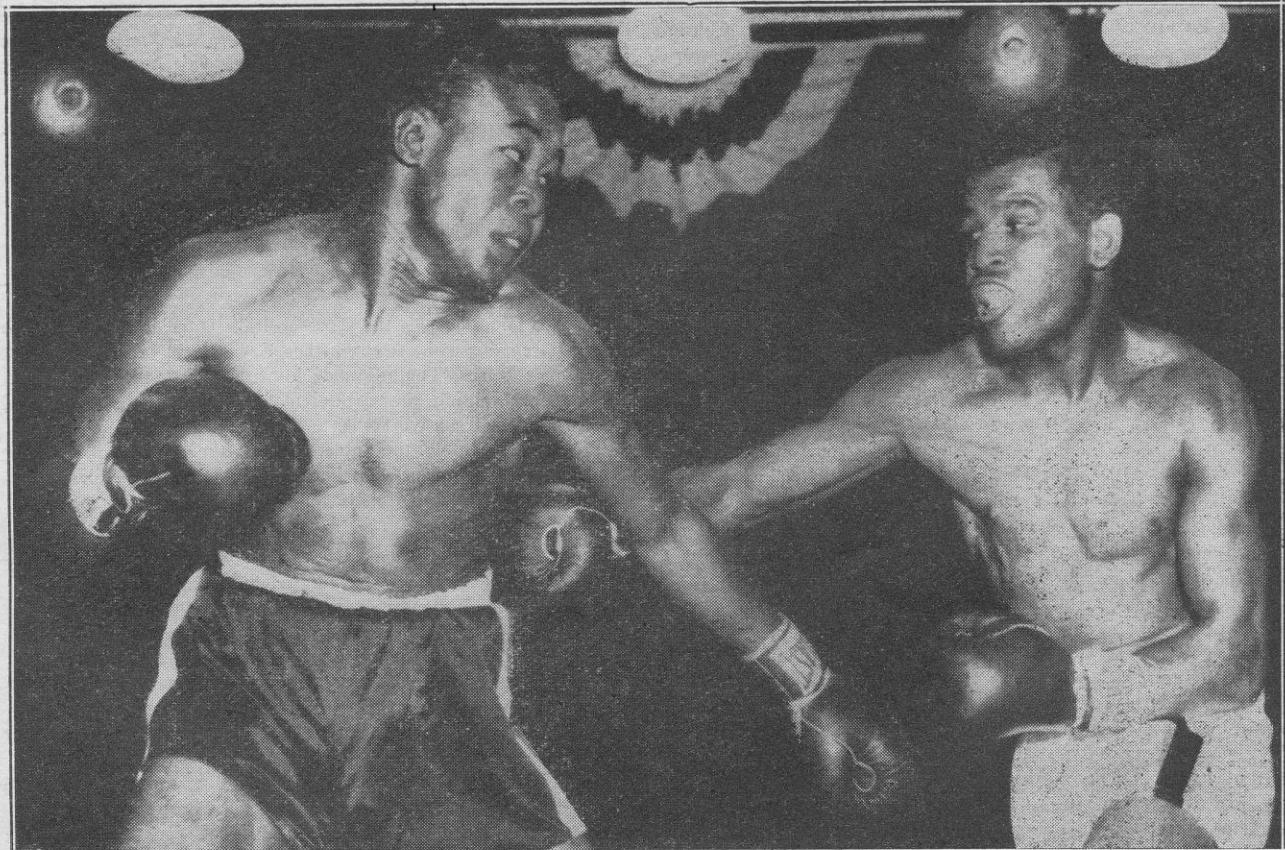
If this crowd wants to keep operating, it would do well to hire an efficient staff to see that things are conducted on a real big-time basis.

# "SUGAR" TRAPS the "HAWK"



Robinson not only had to be on the alert for Gavilan's two fists, but also for the Kid's head. The Cuban, trying to work into close quarters, would tear in with his head bobbing and weaving, and it was a butt that opened a slight cut beside the champion's right

eye in the fourth round. But Ray was careful not to let any further damage result, and he did an excellent job of keeping his own head out of range of Gavilan's when the action moved in close.



Another of Robinson's favorite blows was a right to Gavilan's body. Sugar Ray used this punch often, and at times it not only broke up the Cuban's attack, but slowed the Kid down long enough for the champion to turn loose brilliant flashes of

aggressiveness that bewildered the challenger. Though Gavilan never stopped trying, he couldn't match Robinson's stylish boxing, sharper hitting and superior ring generalship. It was a masterful performance by Ray.