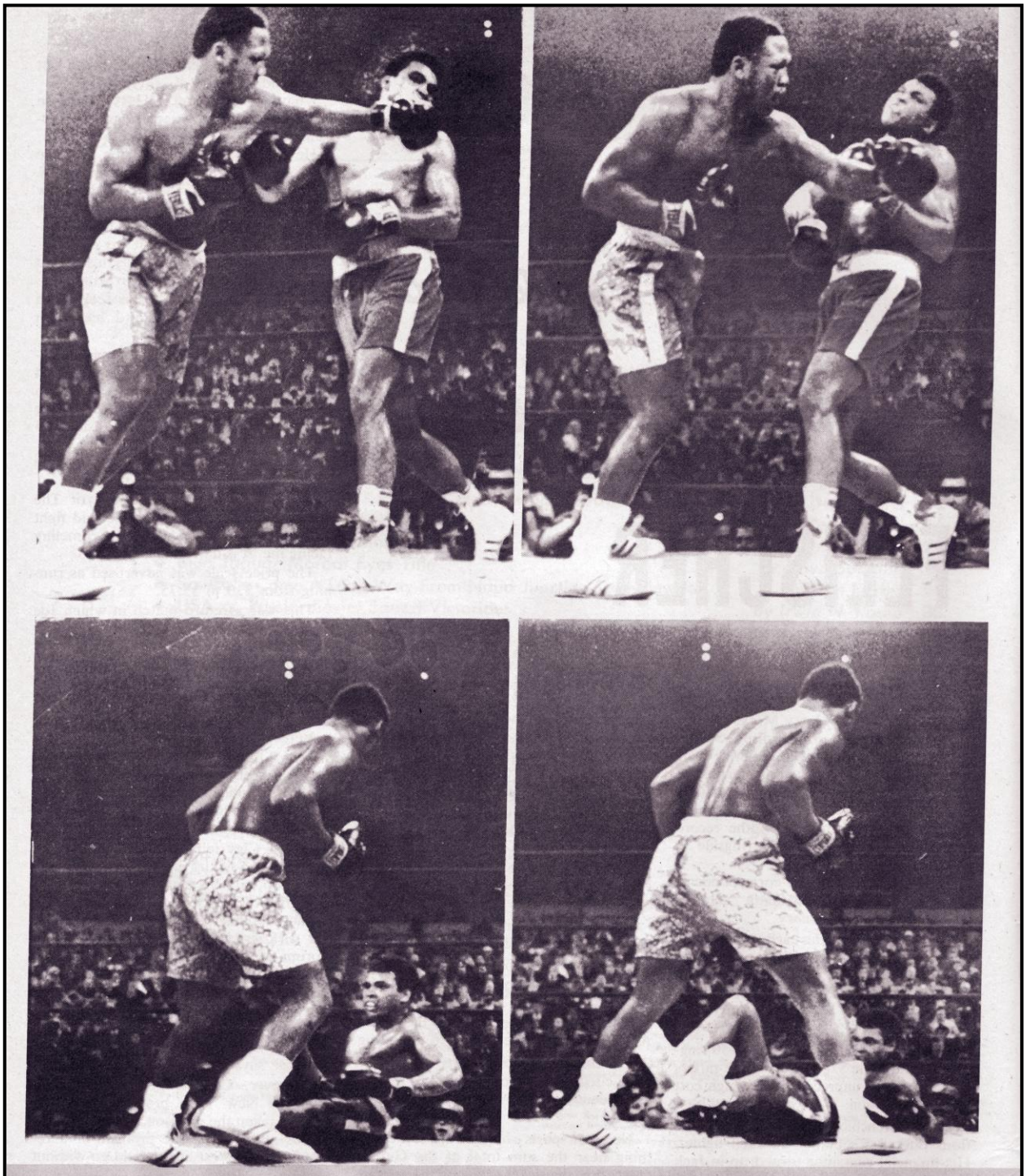
CLAY-FRAZIER CONFIDENTIAL!!



THE KNOCKDOWN

FRAZIER-CLAY CONFIDENTIAL

THOUGH JOE'S WIN DECISIVE, MANY QUESTIONS UNANSWERED

By DAN DANIEL

IN the aftermath of Joe Frazier's emphatic victory over Cassius Clay by unanimous decision of referee Arthur Mercante and judges Bill Recht and Artie Aidala, after a frenetic 15-round battle before 20,455 spectators in New York's Madison Square Garden, quite a few questions, and quite a few established facts, present themselves.

The most interesting question is this: Could Clay, at his peak four years ago, have escaped defeat, which was clinched by a left hook which decked the Muslim in the 15th round?

Clay threw a lot of punches. But they were mostly for show and at no time had Frazier in danger.

Why did Frazier, after punishing his man with body blows in the first four rounds, switch to the head?

When this question was put to Yancey Durham, the champion's trainer-manager, he replied, "Because I told him to." When Yank was pressed for more explicit information he refused to extend his remarks.

Did Frazier's effort realize his ultimate potential against Clay? In the light of what Joe found out about Cassius, would the titleholder be expected to stop his man in a second meeting?

Is there to be a return engagement, and where?

Did the fight, with its $150 ringside admission price, the $5,000,000 guaranteed, share and share alike, to the contestants, come up to expectations and justify the attendant hysteria?

Reviewing the facts established by the 45 minutes of action, we find these outstanding:

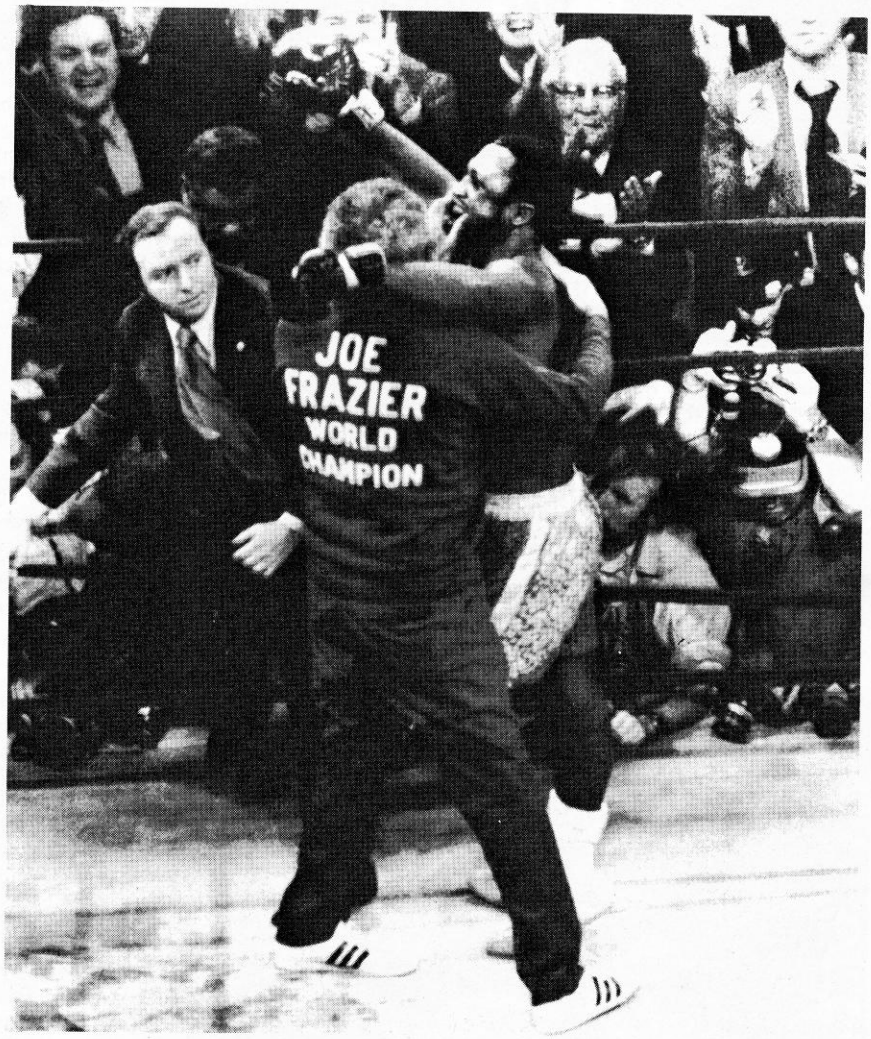
1. Clay's unorthodox conduct right through the fight, with the exception of the 11th and 15th rounds, in which he was in serious danger of a knockout, established him as the standout actor in heavyweight history. He made John Barrymore at his best look and sound like a busher of the footlights.

2. Muhammad set himself up as the master of in-ring insult, and effort to turn derision, in spite of pain, into a useful weapon. In that regard he was the most active perpetrator in the history of heavyweight glove fighting.

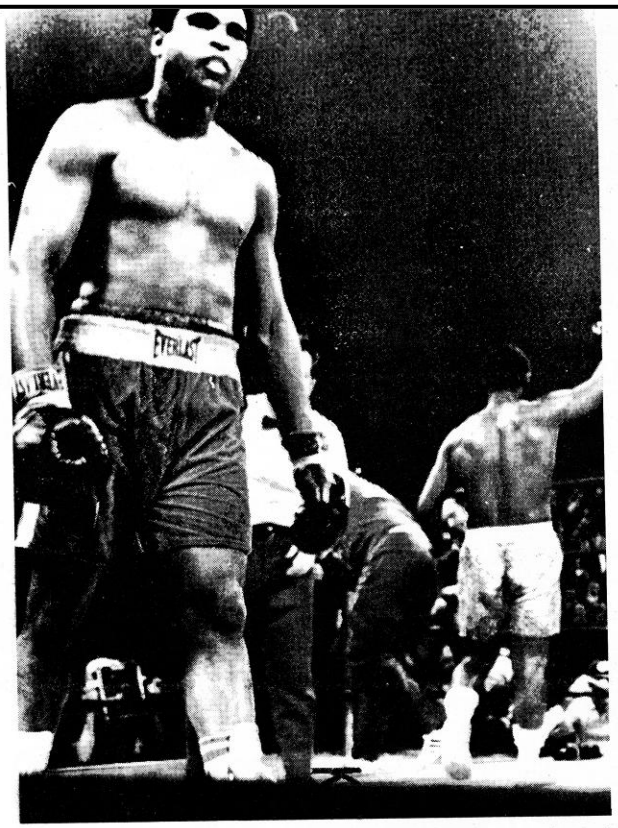
3. It was easy to see, after only a few rounds, that Clay had lost much of his old speed. This was reflected in many giveaways, notably in his limited use of the uppercut, which in the past had been Clay's vital weapon.

4. If there had been any question about Clay's gameness and ability to take punishment, it was dissipated completely. Some of the outstanding title holders and contenders of the past would have wilted under Frazier's attack.

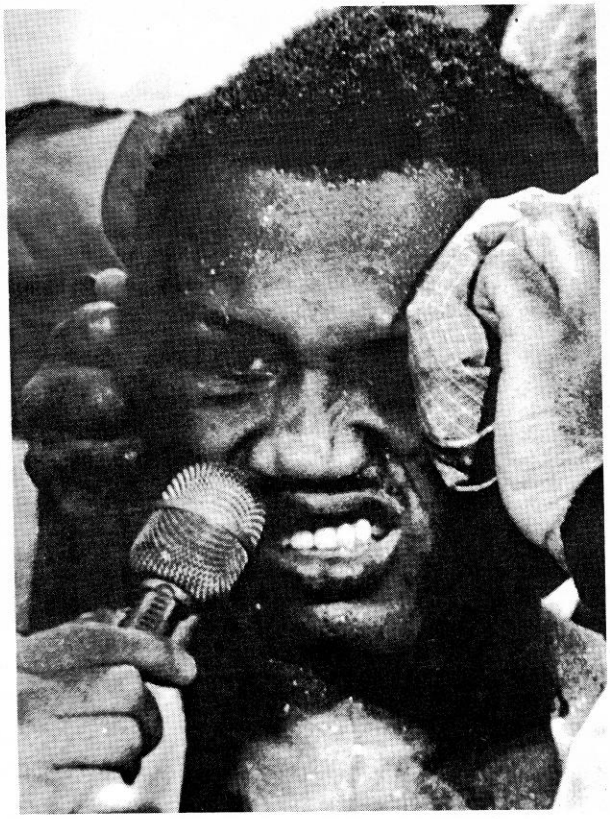
5. Joe indicated that he was safe, for some time to come, from serious threat to his leadership.



A joyous Joe Frazier is embraced by manager Yank Durham after successfully defending his title against Cassius Clay at Madison Square Garden.



A forlorn and beaten Cassius Clay walks back to his corner at the end of the 15th round as Frazier waves to the crowd before hearing the unanimous decision in his favor. It was Clay's first defeat as a pro.



Frazier winces as an icebag is applied to bruises under his eye during a news conference following his successful defense.

Eliminate Clay and the only current heavyweight who might draw with Frazier in the future is George Foreman, who is being nursed along carefully with a title shot in view once Muhammad is erased from the scene, either by another defeat by Frazier or a Supreme Court verdict sending him to a Federal penitentiary for anywhere from two to five years for refusal to respect an Army draft.

6. Cassius turned in a better fight than experts had expected and lost by a margin of 6 rounds against 9 (the writer's count), with the 11th and 15th most decisive in accentuating the former champion's setback.

Clay did not show up in the interview room after the fight. He had gone to Flower-Fifth Avenue Hospital to have his swollen jaw examined. It turned out that there was no fracture, merely a condition which the surgeons called a hematoma.

Taking Clay's place for post-fight questioning was Drew Brown, the Great Bundini, who said nothing significant and pulled a real rock when he said, "No soldier quits in the fox hole."

Bundini blanched when he realized that he had misdirected his verbosity. Clay was nowhere near a fox hole even in thought during the 45 minutes of fighting, which produced his first defeat after 31 victories, 25 of them by KO. For Frazier, the victory was No. 27, 23 by knockout.

Clay's knockdown in the 15th round was only the third of his professional career, his defeat only the second of his entire ring life.

Before Cassius won the title he was decked by Sonny Banks in New York in 1962, and as champion by Henry Cooper in 1963 in London. Banks was despatched in four, Henry in five.

During the post-fight questioning Frazier said, "I don't think he will want another fight."

However, the scuttlebutt now current is that Frazier and Clay will meet again, in the Forum at Inglewood, Cal., which is owned by Jack Kent Cooke.

Cooke signed the papers under which he became a partner in the Garden fight by guaranteeing $4,500,000 of the $5,000,000 assured to Frazier and Clay.

The dope is that there already is an understanding whereby each fighter will receive $1,000,000.

The Forum has been a highly successful enterprise, under the boxing management of the veteran George Parnassus.

Insofar as the official scoring of the fight was concerned, there was no room for doubt or uncertainty.

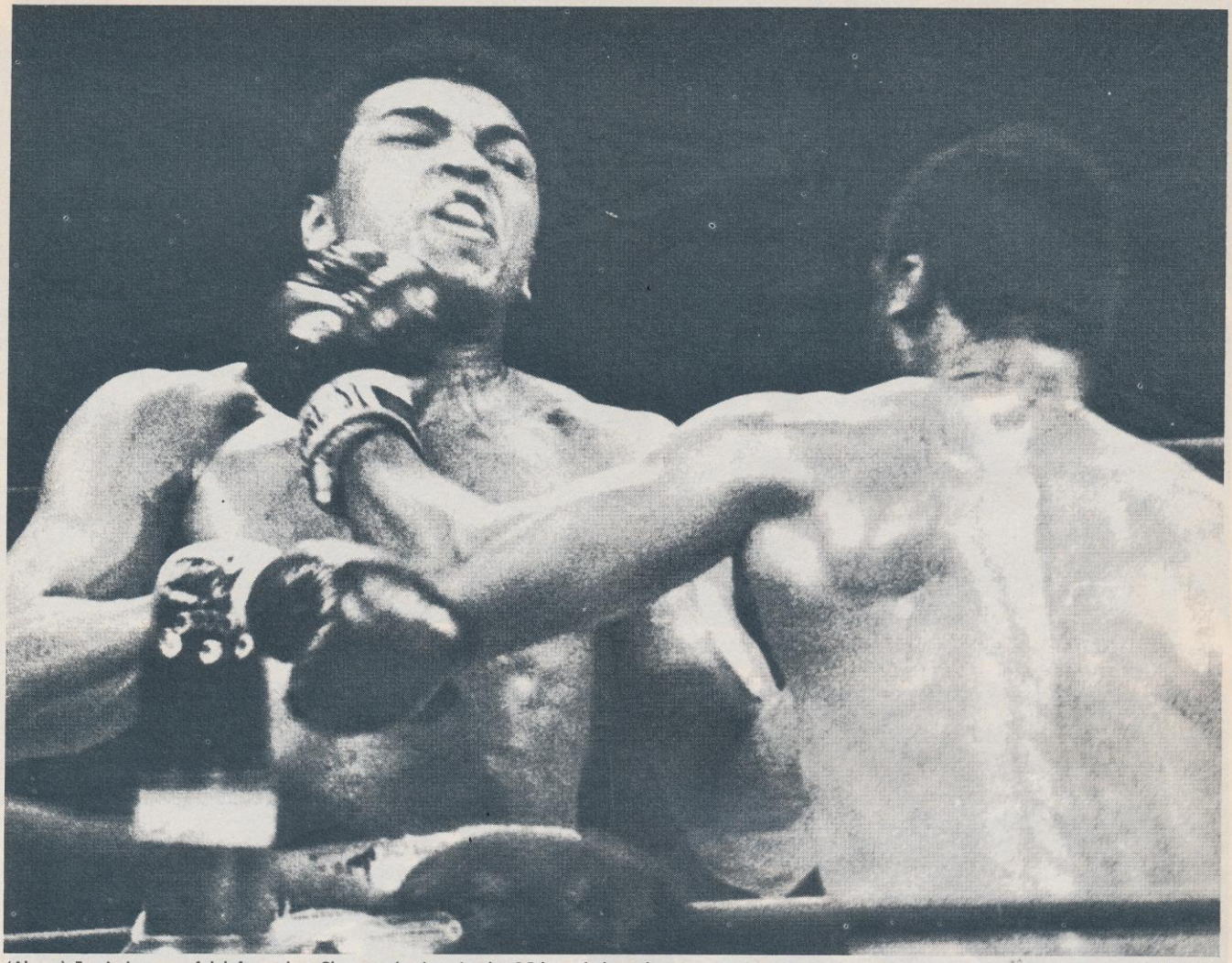
Referee Mercante called it 8 to 6, with one even; Recht saw it a most complete triumph for Joe, 11 to 4; and Aidala sent in a 9-6 card.

The drama of the night found few counterparts in heavyweight history, even covering the Dempsey-Tunney Long Count second fight, in Chicago.

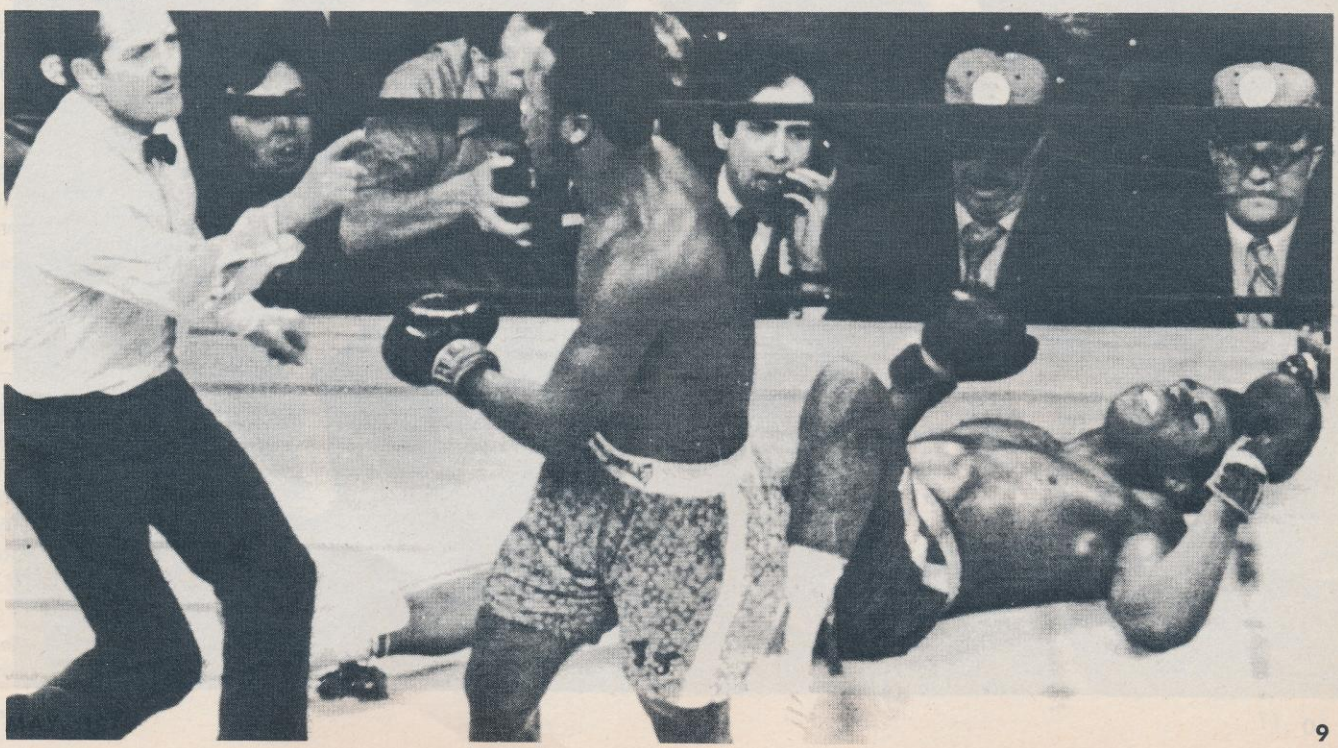
Round after round, the conviction fastened itself on the experts that Clay was being beaten. They weren't fooled by his play-acting, by his headshaking denials of injury and pain whenever he was hit hard, by his spending so much time backed against the ropes, mainly for periods of rest, by his repeated futile sticking out of his left and whirling it under Joe's nose. Clay used his advantage in reach of six-and-a-half inches to some purpose, but not importantly.

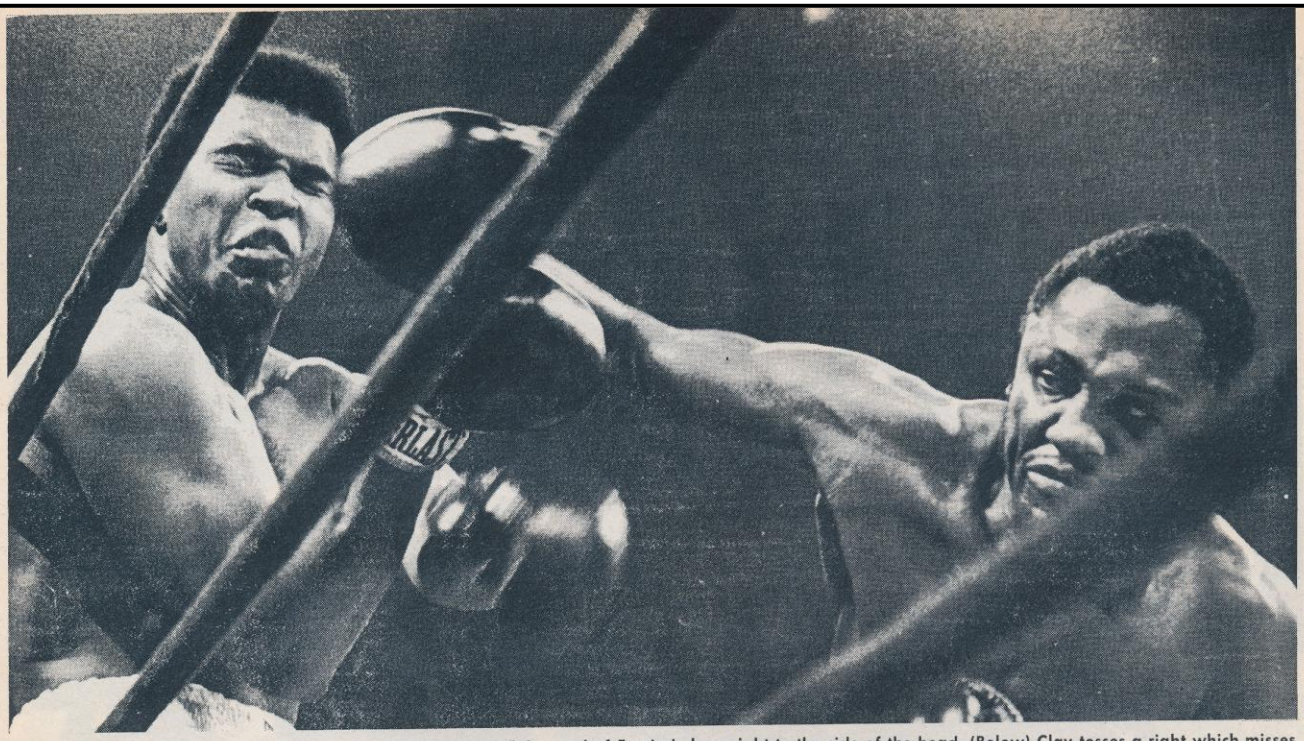
At the noontime weigh-in, Frazier tipped the beam at 205½ pounds, while Clay hit it at 215. Clay also had the advantage in height, standing 6 feet 3 as against 5 feet 11¼ for Frazier.

The emotional impact of the fight, rising minute by minute, achieved a shrieking crescendo in the 15th round when Joe

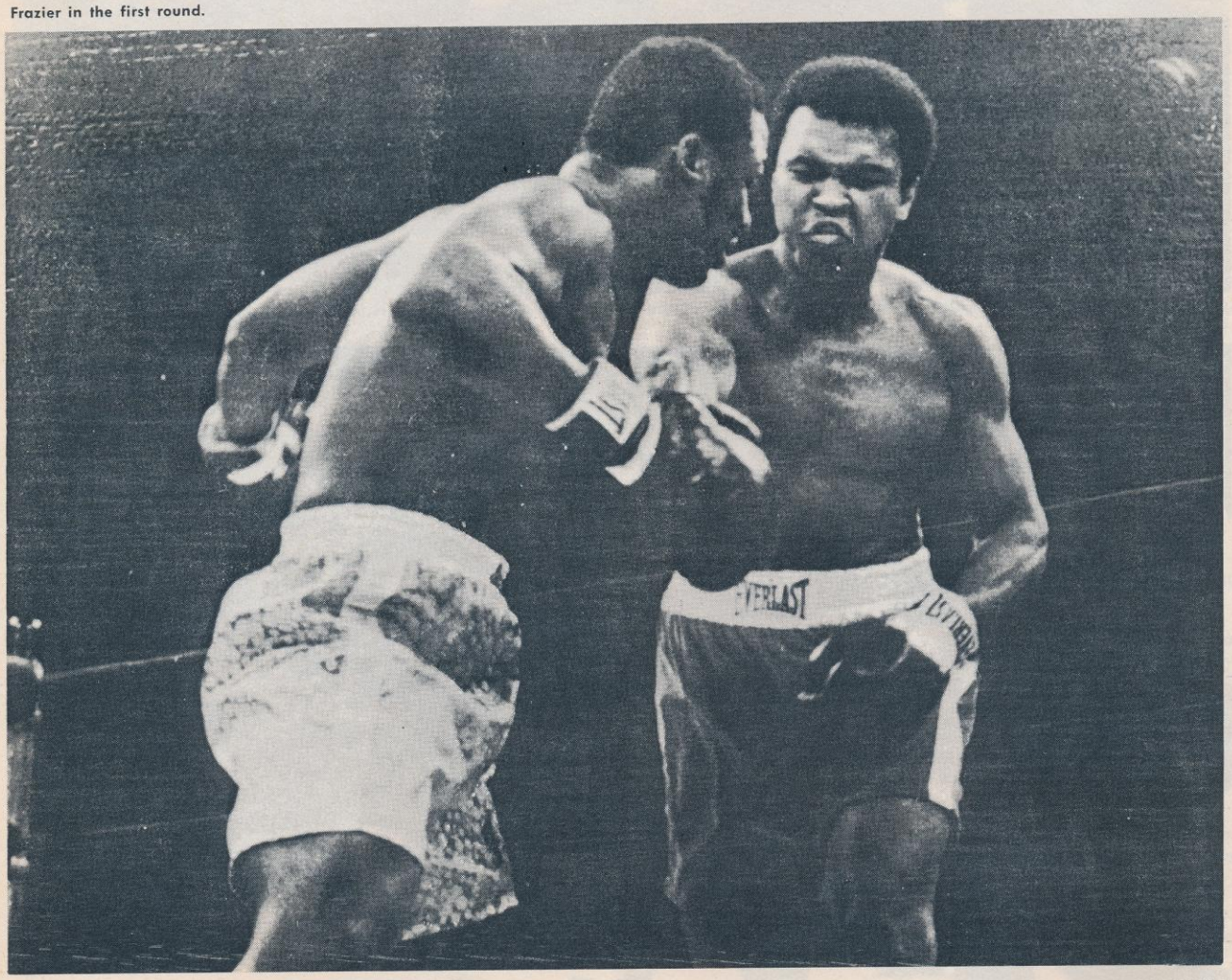


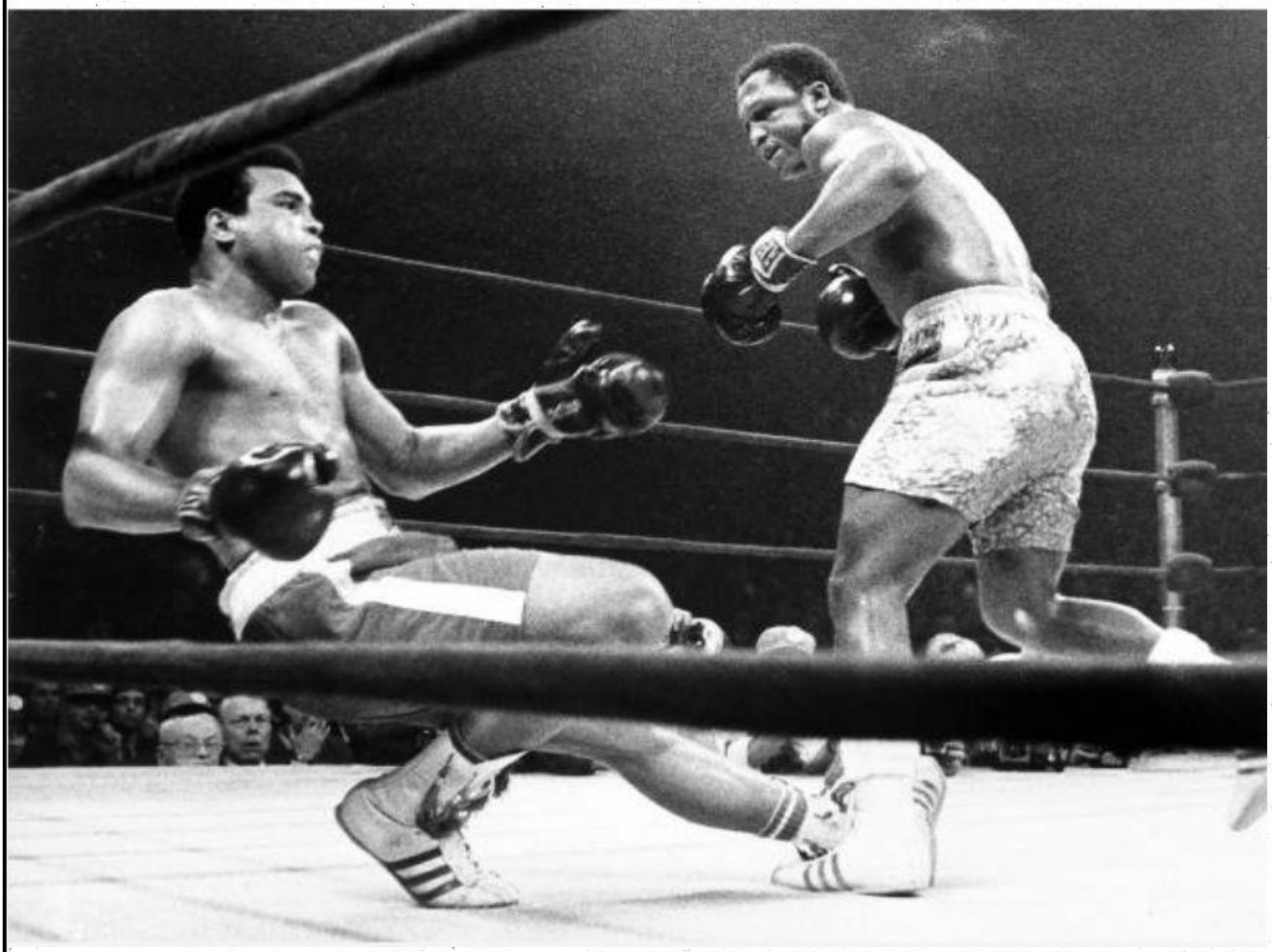
(Above) Frazier's powerful left catches Clay on the jaw in the 15th and down he went. (Below) Cassius is flat on his back as Mercante motions Frazier to neutral corner.





(Above) Clay's eyes close as he grimaces upon being on receiving end of Frazier's long right to the side of the head. (Below) Clay tosses a right which misses Frazier in the first round.





(Above) A stunned Clay is about to land on the canvas, but hard, as a puffy-eyed Frazier watches his downward trip. (Below) Joe has Cassius backed on the ropes in the fourth round and tosses a long right as Clay covers up.

unleashed a terrific left hook which found its target on Clay's right cheek, and sent him sprawling on his back.

Down went Cassius, amid excitement rarely matched in heavyweight title history.

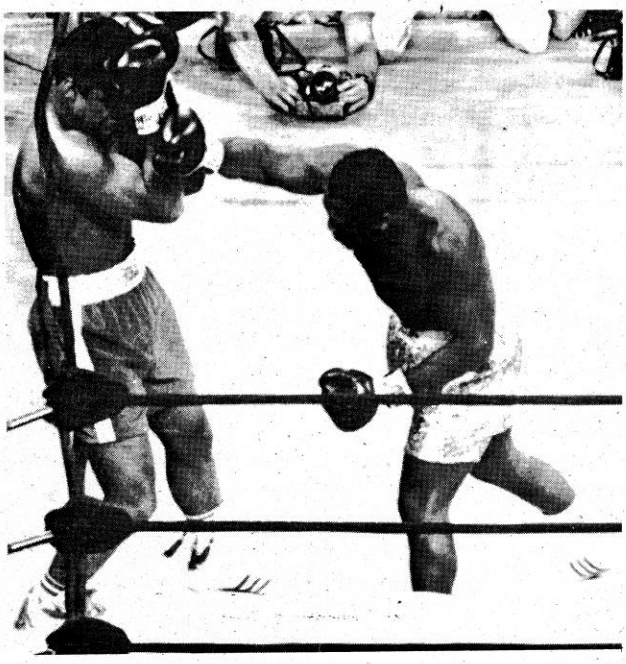
The general supposition was that Clay had been knocked out. But he jumped up quickly and, summoning whatever faculties still were functioning, he put on a flurry. Soon, the bell!

Referee Mercante handled the exciting situation with coolness and skill, in sharp contrast to the 15th round situation not so long ago in the Garden ring, when Clay decked Oscar Bonavena thrice.

How New York was thrown into hysterical expenditure to make the $1,352,952 gate at the Garden, by the unprecedented harvests of the scalpers and dealers in counterfeit tickets, by the dramatic response of the spectators, by the bizarre accoutrements of so many of the spectators, is a story yet to be told.

When it was all over, there was wholehearted appreciation of Joe Frazier, of Philadelphia, age 27, not so many years ago a $75 a week worker in an abbatoir.

It was a bad night for the Clays. Not only was Cassius beaten, but Clay's younger brother, Rudy, was a loser in a six-rounder with Britain's Don McAlinden.



New York Times, March 9, 1971

United Press International

Muhammad Ali starting toward the canvas after taking a hard left hook from Joe Frazier in 15th round of title bout

Champion Floors His Rival With Left Hook in the 15th

By DAVE ANDERSON

In a classic 15-round battle, Joe Frazier broke the wings of the butterfly and smashed the stinger of the bee last night in winning a unanimous 15-round decision over Muhammad Ali at Madison Square Garden.

Defying an anonymous "lose or else" death threat, Frazier settled the controversy over the world heavyweight championship by handing Ali his first defeat with a savage attack that culminated in a thudding knockdown of the deposed titleholder from a hammerlike left hook in the final round.

During the classic brawl, one man in the sellout throng of 20,455 died of a heart attack.

When the verdict was announced, Ali, also known as Cassius Clay, accepted it stoically:

Hurried to his dressing room rather than the postfight interview area, Ali remained there for about half an hour. Suddenly, he departed for Flower-Fifth Avenue Hospital for X-rays of the severely swollen jaw. He was released from the hospital after 40 minutes and left unbandaged.

But even before Ali's jaw began to bloat, the unbeaten Frazier had dulled the vaunted weapons of his rival in recording his 27th victory, although he failed in his quest for his 24th knockout. Ali's defeat ended his winning streak after 31 triumphs, with 25 knockouts.

"I always knew who the champion was," Frazier, his brow swollen above each eye, said later with a smile.

The officials agreed with the Philadelphia slugger. Judge Bill Recht awarded him 11 rounds to four for Ali, while the other judge, Artie Aidala, had Frazier ahead by 9-6. Referee Arthur Mercante had it the closest, 8-6

Continued on Page 29, Column 4

Loser Fails in Plan To Wear Foe Down

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

for Frazier with one round even. During his uncharacteristic postfight silence, Ali sent this word to newsmen through Drew (Bundini) Brown, his assistant trainer: "Don't worry, we'll be back, we ain't through yet." But regarding a possible return bout, Frazier said, "I don't think Clay will want one."

Ali had predicted Frazier would fall "in six rounds" and he had maintained that there was "no way" the recognized champion could outpoint him. But the swarming Philadelphia brawler, battering his Cherry Hill, N. J., neighbor, ended the 29-year-old Ali's credibility as a prophet.

At the age of 27, Frazier justified his reign for all the world to see on a television network with an audience estimated at 300 million. Each fighter will receive $2.5-million from a posible $25-million in total worldwide receipts. The $1,352,951 gate at the Garden was a record for an indoor bout.

Ali remained unscratched, except for a slightly bloodied nose, but his jaw began to swell on both sides in the late rounds from Frazier's persistent hammering.

In the final round, Frazier landed a wild left hook that send Ali sprawling onto his back in a corner. But the 6-to-5 betting underdog was up almost instantly and took the mandatory eight-count on unsteady feet. Moments later, Frazier jolted his 215-pound rival with another left hook. But time was running out on the 205½-pound champion.

With a minute remaining, Ali desperately tried for a knockout, but his punches had virtually no effect. With the crowd roaring in the final seconds, the bell rang and Frazier playfully cuffed Ali across his head, bowed in apparent defeat.

Ali's strategy obviously had been to let Frazier grow armweary while pummeling him. But the chunky champion, despite a 6½-inch disadvantage in reach, defied Ali's tiring jab and moved in under it to convince the Garden audience he deserved the decision.

When the decision was announced, a patter of boos erupted, but the cheers soon thundered above them.

Except for the first round, when the red tassels on Ali's high white shoes flopped in rhythm to his ballerina moves, the deposed titleholder primarily used a flat-footed stance, a radical departure from his floating, stinging style prior to his 3½-year exile that ended last year.

Claiming exemption as a Muslim minister, Ali refused induction in the armed forces on April 28, 1967. He promptly was stripped of his title and license to box by the New York

Fashions at the Frazier-Ali fight— Page 42.

State Athletic Commission and the World Boxing Association, which governs boxing in most of the other states.

Not long after that, Ali was convicted of draft evasion. His sentence was five years in prison, plus a $10,000 fine, but an appeal currently is before the Supreme Court.

While his exile matured Ali's physique, it sabotaged his speed. But in red velvet trunks, he was as arrogant as ever even before the midring instructions. Twice he shouldered Frazier, in green-and-gold brocade trunks, as he whirled around the ring. And twice Frazier glared in contempt.

During the early rounds, Frazier pounded his left hook into Ali's midsection, but several times the deposed champion shook his head in the clinch as if to reassure his idolators.

At the end of the second round, Ali waved his right glove in derision at Frazier as they walked to their corners. And during that intermission, he showed his disdain by refusing to rest on his stool and

moving threateningly to the center of the ring before the bell rang for the third.

Moments later, Ali's voice could be heard through the microphone hanging over the ring. Mercante warned Ali that "no talking" would be tolerated.

Soon, Ali wasn't talking anymore. Near the end of the fourth, Frazier's left hook bloodied Ali's nose. And in the fifth, Frazier strayed from his taciturn character. Holding his hands low, he permitted Ali to punch him at will in a demonstration of the blow's apparent

Frazier literally was laughing in Ali's face now and he was in command. When the bell ended the fifth round, Frazier cuffed Ali across the top of the head.

In the tremendous tempo, Frazier was fulfilling his strategy to "kill the body and the head will die." But somehow, Ali's head remained alive through the middle rounds as his sixth-round prediction was unfulfilled. But before the eighth round, a chant of "Ali, Ali, Ali" began.

Momentarily inspired, Ali waved to the crowd and pointed to them as if to show Frazier it was his audience. But after the round, a roar of "Joe, Joe, Joe" disputed Ali's confidence.

More willing to trade punches, Ali slowed Frazier's pace. The champion's legs were weaving instead of churning. Sensing a knockout opportunity, Ali pounced but Frazier, in his typical fury, fought him off. In the 10th, Ali glanced at the ringside and shouted, "He's out," in a reference to Frazier's weariness.

Possum or a Fox?

In the 11th, Ali slipped to the canvas momentarily. Near the end of the round, he was made wobbly by a left hook. Frazier's savage flurry sent him stumbling into the ropes. He flopped around the ring on rubber legs, but appeared to be playing possum, perhaps to frustrate Frazier further.

But in the 12th, Frazier, strengthened by the surging of joy he receives from punishing an opponent, resumed his frantic pace—but soon it slowed. Each boxer was moving securely, but slowly, until Frazier uncoiled the left hook that dropped Ali in the final round.

It was only the third time Ali had been knocked down in his decade of competition. Sonny Banks floored him in 1962 during his 11th bout and Henry Cooper flattened him in 1963 during his 19th bout.

But the knockdown by Frazier was the final embarrassment for the deposed champion, the sixth ex-heavyweight champion to fail in an attempt to regain his title. The others were Joe Louis, Jack Dempsey, Jim Jeffries, Bob Fitzsimmons and James J. Corbett. Only Floyd Patterson has succeeded in regaining it.

In his failure, Ali not only lost, but more embarrassing, he was silenced.

Sports of The Times

Epic Worth the Price

By ARTHUR DALEY

The multimillion dollar fight in Madison Square Garden last night was worth every glorious, heartbreaking penny. Rarely does anything so expensive live up to advance billing or exceed expectations. But the wildly exciting exhibition of primitive savagery that Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali put on over 15 exhausting rounds was an epic that fit the price tag.

Frazier won a decision because he punched himself out so completely that he just didn't have that extra little zing to put into the one wallop that would have finished it by a knockout earlier. And Ali was still vertical at the end because he was just too proud a man, too magnificent an athlete and too gutsy a warrior to let himself stay down.

He had been toppled in the 15th round by one of those uncountable Frazier left hooks that disarranged and puffed up the right side of the Ali face until it looked as though the former Cassius Clay had been stricken by a bad case of the mumps. But Frazier was no bargain at the final bell. His right eye was almost closed and his profile was a mass of welts.

The margin of superiority was reasonably clear-cut with Frazier ahead on the cards of all three ring officials. Nor did the crowd react in angry disapproval as is normally the case when the spectators let wishful thinking misdirect their emotions. Everyone sensed that Ali had failed.

Bee Is Stung Often

He failed gloriously, though, in a strange sort of bout where he neither floated like a butterfly nor stung like a bee, supposedly his normal method of operations. His dancing speed fled early. He was hit more often by Frazier in 15 rounds than he had been hit by all his other opponents together in a hitherto unbeaten career.

In the 11th round, the relentless Frazier—he attacks with the ceaseless whirr of a buzzsaw—began to take Ali cruelly apart with those ferocious left hooks. He exploded one and Ali went wobbling all over the ring, staggering woozily at the end of the round as Frazier's flailing left kept missing the finisher.

He was still missing it through the 12th and 13th when he had an inviting target in front of him, an Ali whose defenses were feeble and whose own punching fires were hardly embers. But in the 14th, Ali unexpectedly came back from the dead, pounded the startled Frazier and detoured his trip to oblivion. He almost went out again in the last round, but survived in some miraculous fashion.

Wait a minute. It wasn't a miracle. Frazier was just too tired to complete a job that had begun to look easy. As the hands of the clock advanced toward the finish of the fight, Frazier pinned Ali in a corner and leaned against him, his face a mask of weariness and his grin a bloody smirk.

If everything about this fight was not in accordance with the original ideas that had been plotted for it by the experts, it took on a new and appealing character of its own. There were times when Ali looked absolutely helpless. He flicked feeble little teasers at the never-stop foe. The man who had danced out of harm's way for all his fistic life stopped stepping even though there were two at hand to tango.

'Sticks and Stones'

He let Frazier corner him and pin him against the ropes. At times he even stood there snarling, sneering and offering taunts. Frazier merely thought an old boyhood thought: "Sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me." Maybe it was a quirk in the Ali defense mechanism, brought on by the unexpectedness of something that never had happened to him before.

How much his entire mental attitude was warped by the way his jaw was flailed by the Frazier hooks is beyond conjecture. This also was a new experience, and a trip to the hospital afterwards for X-rays and diagnosis was proof positive that it was a physical handicap of unquestionable severity.

It was a thriller all the way, jam-packed with suspense and tingling from start to finish with the special brand of drama inherent in all heavyweight championship bouts. Not until the last third of the fight—if it is proper to partition it that way—did Frazier's thumping hooks carry him definitely into the lead.

So breathless was the pace that awed ringsiders sometimes were wondering near the end how either of them could still reach deeply within for a galvanic outburst that provided another electric shock of excitement. Thanks to the last-round knockdown, it was to stay exciting to the end.

Frazier left the ring with undisputed possession of the heavyweight championship of the world, a claim that always had rested in the shadow of his unfrocked predecessor, Muhammad Ali. The cash customers undoubtedly had to feel that they got their money's worth in a magnificent bout that was prize fighting at its best.