

KINGPETCH FIRST TO REGAIN 112 POUND TITLE

By NAT FLEISCHER

(Special to the Ring) Bangkok, Thailand. With the cheers of 15,000 of his countrymen led by King Phumipol Adulej ringing in his ears Pone Kingpetch picked himself off the deck in the eighth round and rallied to recover the world flyweight title with a split fifteen-round decision over Masahiko (Fighting) Harada of Japan.

The twenty-six-year-old Thai who lost the title to the nineteen-year-old Japanese in a big upset in Tokyo last October, when he was knocked out in the eleventh round, reversed the pattern of their first fight in which he started strong only to wilt under a two-fisted attack.

This time it was Harada, now the champion, who got off fast and during the early rounds it not only appeared as if he would repeat his previous victory, but that he again would knock Kingpetch out.

Stiff left jabs and sharp right crosses gave Harada an advantage during the first seven rounds. He forced the fight and kept his taller opponent on the defensive. The large and noisy crowd in the Bangkok National Gym kept urging Kingpetch on, but he seemed unable to stem the tide of Harada's offense and, time and again, he was rocked by its impact.

When things looked darkest for Pone the tide turned. In the seventh round a small cut was opened over his left eye and his cheek was bruised by Harada's tattoo. The champion's attack continued into the eighth round and in the closing moments of that heat a right to the jaw tumbled Kingpetch to the canvas. The count of Referee Sangvien Hiramleka had reached three when the bell rang. Pone got up and walked to his corner.

When the ninth round got under way the tide changed. Kingpetch slowly took over control of the fight.

During the next few rounds this reversal in the trend of the contest became more and more obvious and the arena rocked by the cheers of the fans, who were kept back from the ringside press rows by a barbed wire fence.

Although Harada still kept moving forward he was met by a barrage of left jabs and stiff uppercuts which in the closing rounds were Pone's most effective weapons.

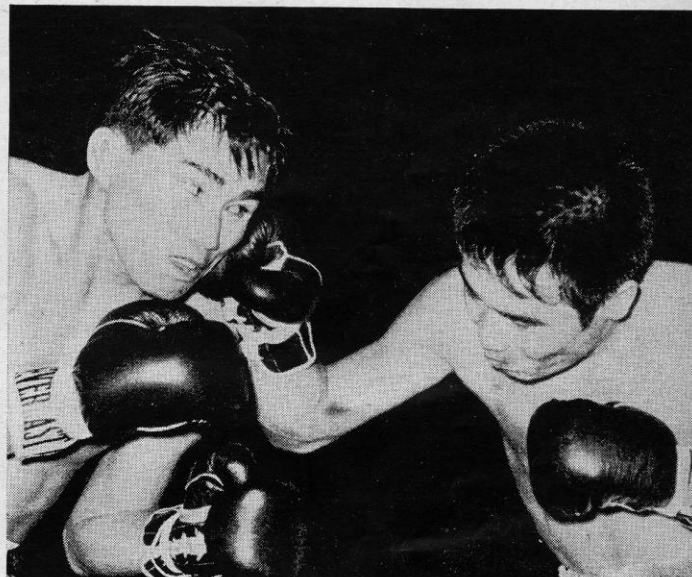
As I was one of the judges I checked my score card as the fight went into its final rounds and saw that while I still had the champion ahead he would have to regain command or his title would be lost.

Harada fought hard in the final three rounds, but urged on by the now unruly fans, Kingpetch would not be denied. He held off the champion's best efforts and won going away.

When the vote was given, the crowd went wild and forced their way into the ring. It took the Military Police to maintain order and after posing for some photos Kingpetch was whisked out of the arena without returning to his dressing room.

Japanese Judge Haruo Ishiwatarido scored the fight even, giving each 69 points, I had it 71-67 for Kingpetch, while the referee's score was 72-67 for Pone.

Harada and his manager, Takeshi Sasazaki, found no fault with the verdict, but complained bitterly about the crowd.



Harada (right) lands a right to the jaw of Kingpetch in the early going. This punch was the most effective weapon of the Japanese as he piled up a lead over the first half of the fight. In the latter stages of the contest Pone was able to keep the Champion off balance with the use of his longer reach as he used his jab to counter the forcing attack of his rival.

Sasazaki blamed the fans for his fighter's loss. He said, however, that he would not protest.

It took twenty-five minutes, he said, for Harada to make his way from the entrance to the gym to the ring before the fight and he said many of the fans, pushed and pulled on him along the way. Kingpetch was carried into the ring by his handlers.

In rewinning the title Pone completed the recovery circle. Up until now, all but the flyweight championship has been regained. It is strange that the smallest of the eight major divisions in boxing should be the last to have a two-time ruler. Over the years much had been written about how no one ever regained the heavyweight crown, until Floyd Patterson turned the trick against Ingemar Johansson in 1960. The fact that the same situation was true in the flyweight division was overlooked.

A third meeting between these two fine fighters appears to be assured. Both are anxious for such a contest to be held in Tokyo or Bangkok.

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