

EDDIE MACHEN - He Met The Best

By Jim Amato

(Photo - Courtesy of Harry Shaffer)

He was one of the best heavyweights of his era and possibly one of the best heavyweights to have never claimed the title. He fought the best of the late 1950's and 60's with a high degree of success.

Eddie Machen was born on July 15, 1932 in Redding, California and he entered the punch for pay ranks in 1955. Eddie won all eleven of his bouts during his maiden year including a knockout over highly regarded Howard King.

In 1956 Eddie added eight more victories and established himself as a force to be reckoned with in the heavyweight division. He twice defeated Julio Mederos and also won two bouts against the dangerous Nino Valdes. Eddie closed 1956 with a points victory over tough Johnny Summerlin.

Machen opened 1957 with a pair of wins over the clever former light heavyweight champion Joey Maxim of Cleveland. He also defeated Bob Baker and closed the year with a kayo over Tommy "Hurricane" Jackson. Eddie was now a leading contender for Floyd Patterson's heavyweight title.

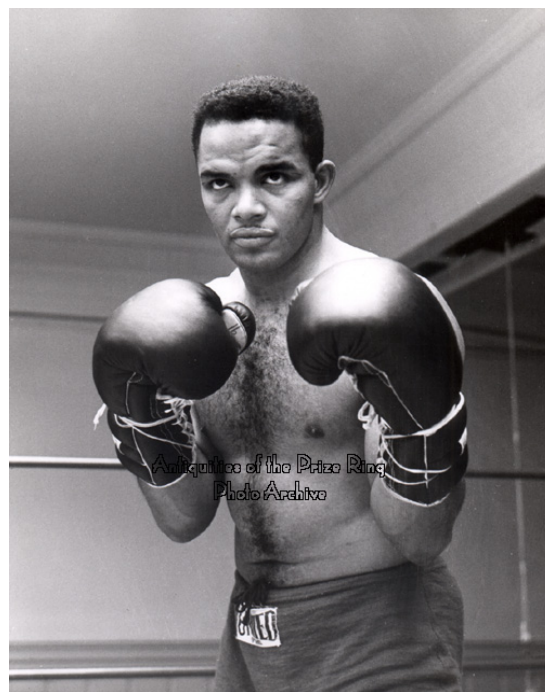
It was in 1958 that the fortunes of Eddie Machen's career began to take a turn. He opened the year by battling to a draw with the slick Zora Folley. Then came the bout that shocked the boxing world. Eddie traveled to Sweden to meet Ingemar Johansson, the fight would last only 2:16 but it would thrust Ingo into a title fight against Patterson and leave Eddie on a long waiting list. Ingo would upset Floyd to win the crown and then Patterson would roar back to regain it. That would set up a rubber match that Floyd would win. From the time Eddie lost to Ingo and the conclusion of the Patterson-Johansson trilogy, two and a half years had passed.

After the loss to Ingo, Eddie won seven straight and then was matched again with Zora Folley. This time Zora got the verdict. Machen rebounded with three more wins including Alex Miteff and Alonzo Johnson among his victims.

On September 7, 1960 Eddie stepped into the ring to face the feared Sonny Liston. To many Liston was the "Uncrowned Heavyweight Champion" and a bout with Patterson was being called for by the fans and press alike. Only Eddie stood in Sonny's way. The bout took place in Seattle and Eddie gave the brutish Liston all he could handle. In the end Sonny took a unanimous decision despite losing three points for low blows. Nevertheless, Eddie's game showing won him the admiration of boxing fans. Despite the win over the highly ranked Machen, Sonny would have to wait two more years to get Patterson into the ring with him.

Eddie would come back to win three in a row but then he was upset over ten rounds by the cagey Harold Johnson. Machen would regroup and put together a streak of ten wins and one draw. The draw was with the murderous punching Cleveland Williams. Among the boxers Eddie beat during this streak were Mike DeJohn, Brian London, Doug Jones and Bert Whitehurst. This finally led Eddie to the ghost that had long eluded him, Floyd Patterson.

By now it was 1964 and Eddie returned to Sweden, the place of his disastrous loss to Johansson to face



Floyd. This was one of Patterson's best career performances as won a hard fought decision over Machen. Still Eddie had done well enough to qualify for a title fight.

On March 5, 1965 Eddie met tall, lanky Ernie Terrell for the "vacant" World Boxing Association title. Cassius Clay, a.k.a., Muhammad Ali had been stripped of his title by the WBA. The Terrell-Machen battle was not a good pairing of styles and after a rather boring fifteen rounds, Terrell was awarded the championship. Eddie would close 1965 by drawing with Elmer Rush.

Machen would open 1966 with back to back decision losses to Karl Mildenberger and Manuel Ramos. He would outfight the tough Joey Orbillo. Next Eddie would show flashes of his former greatness and pull off a major upset with a points win over top prospect Jerry Quarry.

Two fights after the upset of Quarry, Eddie would meet another streaking prospect, 1964 Olympic champion, Joe Frazier. This time Lady Luck looked the other way for Eddie and he was halted by "Smokin' Joe" in the tenth round.

Machen was now relegated to the role of a trail horse. In 1967 he dropped a decision to up and coming Henry Clark. In his last professional fight, Eddie was stopped in three by hard hitting Boone Kirkman.

In all Eddie had 64 pro fights. He won 50 of them. He took out 29 opponents. He fought champions Liston, Patterson, Johansson, Terrell, Frazier, Maxim and Harold Johnson. He also did battle with top contenders like Zora Folley, Cleveland Williams, Alex Mitiff, Mike DeJohn, Willie Besmanoff, Doug Jones, Tommy Jackson, Nino Valdes, Karl Mildenberger, Jerry Quarry, Bob Baker, Bert Whitehurst, Howard King, Henry Clark, Julio Mederos, Joey Orbillo, Brian London, Wayne Bethea and Boone Kirkman. That is very impressive!

Eddie Machen was only forty years old when he left this world. It was only five years after his last fight but he left a legacy that will live forever.

Stinging Jabs and Body Blows Lead to a Unanimous Decision

Liston Defeats Machen in 12-Rounder at Seattle—Portland Heavyweight Is Floored by Low Blow in 11th

SEATTLE, Sept. 7 (AP)—Sonny Liston of Philadelphia won a twelve-round decision tonight over Eddie Machen of Portland, Ore., in a nationally televised fight. Liston weighed 211 pounds, Machen, 196.

There were no knockdowns, but Liston's wildly flailing fists landed low in the sixth and eleventh rounds.

Machen went down from the second solid smash below the belt and was given a minute to recover. The referee, Whitey Domstad, took the eleventh round from Liston for the errant blow.

The decision was unanimous, the referee giving every round except the eleventh to the victor. The two judges also gave it to Liston, one by 2 points and one by four.

The Associated Press card had Liston by 3 points.

The Portlander's strategy was apparent from the opening bell. He retreated throughout the fight, forcing Liston to move and turn and never presenting an open target.

There were several flurries of tempo after Liston landed his first low blow in the sixth. The fans immediately swung to Machen. Almost every blow to the body by the powerful Philadelphia brought cries of "foul" from the stands.

The pre-fight opinion was that Machen had a good chance to win if the fight went beyond five or six rounds. Liston, how-

ever, was in perfect condition and showed no signs of weariness at the finish.

His only show of emotion was a slight smile after he slipped while throwing a punch late in the fight.

Tempers flared in the fifth round when the fighters were wrestling along the ropes and they nearly exchanged punches after the bell. They did fight after the bell sounded in the eleventh, both swinging as the referee moved in to part them.

Liston's best blows were a stinging left jab and occasional left and rights to the body at close range. Machen scored best—but rarely—with a left hook to the jaw as a counter to Liston's right.

The crowd was estimated at around 7,500 which would push the total gate close to \$100,000, including television fees.

Machen said he went the distance "without a right hand." The fighter said he injured his right arm while sparring with Billy Besmanoff during training last week and could not punch with it tonight.

Liston said he was disappointed that Machen refused to mix it up. The Philadelphian said "You can't do anything when the other guy is running."

In a companion feature Phil Moyer, 155, Portland, defeated Cecil Short, 150, Cleveland, over the 10-round route. Short went to his knees during an exchange in the ninth but it was ruled a slip. There were no knock-downs.