BOXING **by GILBERT ROGIN**

Doc Moore, a man with memories, and Teddy Brenner, a man with TV's bounty, talk of the fight game at

OLD ST. NICK'S

NOT SO LONG AGO, Ezzard Charles, whose attitude toward his profession even when he had the skills was dispassionate, and now, on the slide of years, is that of a man in sober pursuit of the buck, sat in a dressing room at New York's St. Nicholas Arena. A few minutes before, he had been the first ex-heavyweight champion to appear at St. Nick's, the oldest operating fight club in America, which, although it seats only 3,500, is known to millions from the Monday night telecasts. Charles had also just been defeated by an opponent 12 years his junior.

"When I was a boy," he said gently, "I used to listen to the fights from St. Nick's and wonder if I'd ever make it there on the way up. Well, I didn't, not until now when I'm going down."

What Charles finally came to is a three-story building fronting nearly a quarter of the somber block between Central Park and Columbus Avenue on West 66th Street. It is bordered by a bowling alley and bar and one of those tall garages which, unlike St. Nick's, has cool innards even in summer.

St. Nick's is built in the grim lines of the Italian Renaissance, but it has its crust of latter-century furbelows, which architects used to squeeze on their urban structures like pastry cooks. Hanging out over the sidewalk is a crazy orange fire escape, dependent from chains and a system of pulleys, which looks more like a run for mountain goats than a way out.

The arena was erected in 1896 for the hockey club of the same name. According to the most reliable account, the first boxing matches were staged there in the summer of 1911. It has also been used for roller skating, bowling, basketball, ballroom dancing, social gatherings and wrestling. Today, only fitful performances of the last three go on inside.

It did, however, like Ozymandias' works, have a glorious past not apparent from the remains. The past resides truly, if not accurately in all its details, in the memories of those who moved in it. Such a longtime mover is Doc Moore, a spare, alert old gentleman who saw the fighters at St. Nick's when they were, as he lovingly tells it, "masters who learned their trade and knew all the moves": masters like Jack Britton, Ted (Kid) Lewis, Harry Greb, Kid Chocolate, Sam Langford, Jack Blackburn, Joe Walcott (the original), Abe Attell, Terry McGovern, Stanley Ketchel, Tony Canzoneri, Al Singer and Benny Leonard.

Doc Moore was one of the finest of managers, matchmakers and trainers, or, as he would prefer it, teachers. "Sure, there are millions of trainers today," he says, "but very few teachers."

"St. Nick's hockey rink," Moore recalled recently, "had one of the first machines that made ice, and people used to come and buy it in big cakes. They didn't like to put that artificial stuff in their drinks, though. Scared it had chemicals in it.

"Cornelius Fellowes first owned the place, a fine-looking man and a real sport. I read the other day that he's alive in Florida somewhere. Harry Pollock was the fight promoter then and the manager of Freddie Welsh, Young Corbett—lots of them. A great dude he was; drank champagne, carried a cane and dressed to kill. Only time they'd run a fight at St. Nick's would be in the summer, on account of the hockey. The other night I went back there. It was pretty warm inside and no air-conditioning. You don't see any rich people going to fights on a night like that. They're home with their air-conditioning and television. That's the way it was then. No high-hats and gowns. Just the workingman. You know, in the summer the fights at St. Nick's are back with the people they always belonged to—the workingman.

"After Pollock it was either the McMahon boys or Jimmy Johnston who ran the boxing. I was preliminary matchmaker for Johnston when a boy would get $5 for four rounds and $15 for six [the current St. Nick's scale is $75 and $150].

"Oh, St. Nick's was a beautiful place then," Moore continued. "It was a dance hall too, you know. They had a big dome up there of cut glass and a beautiful marble staircase leading up to the hall. And postal cards, like they have in restaurants, depicting that glass dome, which you could send to friends. A beautiful neighborhood too; steak house on the corner with a high-class trade; people in show business. We'd get one of those low-broads sneaking into St. Nick's every so often dressed in men's pants.

"I remember one night Sam Lang-

BOSS OF ST. NICK'S is Teddy Brenner, who made his matchmaking name at Brooklyn's Eastern Parkway, known as House of Upsets from many underdogs who prevailed.

ford was to fight Battling Johnson, a big heavyweight who had fought them all. Before the fight Johnson says he's sick and won't go on. Dr. Thompson was the ring doctor then, a very natty little fellow and a great talker, but he couldn't do a thing to convince Johnson otherwise. But there was a fellow around named Paulie Bracken who trained jockeys. Jimmy Johnston told Paulie to pretend he was a doctor, examine Johnson and tell him he was all right so they could get on with the fight. Paulie took off with a black bag which he thought was the doctor's, put the big man on a table and opened the bag so he'd have some instruments to fiddle around with. Inside, though, it's full of screwdrivers and tape because it was left around by some electrician and wasn't Dr. Thompson's at all. Didn't bother Paulie, though. He flipped Johnson on his stomach, pounded on his back, turned him over, tapped his lungs, took his pulse and said: 'Mr. Johnson, you're the strongest man I've ever seen. Get your tights on and go out there and fight.' Johnson did."

TEDDY TAKES OVER

In the 1940s, after a succession of promoters, St. Nick's was taken over by Mike Jacobs to develop star-bout performers for his Madison Square Garden shows and to maintain the continuity for his radio broadcasts when the Garden was dark, as the parochialists in the fight game say. This means that the circus or rodeo is playing there. In 1947 Jacobs' matchmaker at the arena was a forthright young man named Teddy Brenner. Brenner today is promoter and matchmaker of his own New York Boxing Club which puts on the fights from—this, an insidious TV term—St. Nick's.

Brenner was born in Brooklyn 39 years ago. He got his first boxing job through a palship with Irving Cohen, the manager of Rocky Graziano, who in 1946 was making matches for a club in New Brunswick, N.J. The way Brenner relates it, he kept nudging Cohen for the *rationale* of matching so-and-so with so-and-so and not so-and-so, until one day, driving back from Jersey, Cohen turned to him and said: "You're always talking of why I should have done what I didn't. I'm busy. You do it from now on in." Brenner's most celebrated work from then on in until St. Nick's was as matchmaker at Brooklyn's Eastern Parkway.

Running a fight club in the television era requires, first of all, television. Otherwise you don't run a fight club.

ST. NICK'S AVERAGE WEEKLY STATEMENT

INCOME	
Gross Gate*	$2,500
TV Money	7,000
TOTAL	$9,500

EXPENSES	
Rent	$1,000
Payroll	1,500
Main Purses	4,000
Prelim. Purses	1,000
Publicity, etc.	300
Office Rent	$ 35
Phone	115
Officials' Fees	300
Gloves	11
Printing	138
Boxers' Fund	25
TV Tax	350
Ticket Tax	375
Boxers' Insurance	48
Transportation	150
TOTAL	$9,347

*Average since March at $5 top, maximum seating of 3,500. Expected to rise in winter.

You do something else. Brenner concedes that he would be able to operate without it only if there were no televised bouts at all. "If people can watch fights for nothing on a Wednesday and a Friday," he says, "why should they come to my place and pay something on a Monday?" Next in importance is making the matches. Some managers leaving Brenner's office moan up and down Eighth Avenue about favoritism, deals, high-handed methods. As: "Who does he offer me for an opponent? An animal, that's who. They have to bring him up from Baltimore in a cage." Or: "The only way he gives you a fight is to lose two in a row. Only how can I get my fighter in so I can drop the pair?" That, though, is the way things are in the game and not a condemnation of Brenner. It is said that there are barely 10 managers in the country making more than $100 a week from boxing.

Bouts have to be much more evenly matched for TV fights than before too, for, as Brenner explains it, "If there are too many quick knockouts the sponsor gets jobbed out of his commercials." He also finds that good boxers don't come across on TV as well as punchers. A puncher and a clever fellow who is also evasive—*i.e.*, able to keep out of the way—make the ideal match. And if it's a mixed bout, one between a Negro and white performer, it pulls even better.

It was one of Doc Moore's warm, workingman nights at St. Nick's last Monday. Smoke blued the high hall, and the guys in the narrow wooden gallery stamped on the boards and told the fighters what to throw, needled the ref. It was all there but the masters with their lovely, learned moves. It is said that their clever likes won't be seen again. TV is the villain of the piece, foreclosing the small clubs and gyms where the fighter learns by watching and imitating. "I used to make my boys watch the masters for hours," Moore says, "but who is there to watch now?" The club and the gym are the necessary corpus of the game, and must be protected. Otherwise, it's like the guy hollered in St. Nick's: "Hit him in the stomach, kid. Hit him in the stomach. If you kill the body, then the head must die." END

"I wonder if you could identify something for me?"