

Sports Illustrated, September 19, 1955

## *'HOW'S MARCIANO GONNA HIT ME?'*

CHALLENGER MOORE TELLS IN HIS OWN WORDS—AND ARTIST ROBERT RIGER'S DRAWINGS SHOW—HOW MOORE EXPECTS TO WIN THE WORLD'S HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP FROM ROCKY MARCIANO IN NEXT TUESDAY NIGHT'S BIG FIGHT

BY EZRA BOWEN



## Sports Illustrated, September 19, 1955

When I go in there I never worry about what he's gonna do. I know what he's gonna do.

"I'm a stylist. I can cope with any situation.

"Nobody's been stronger than me in there. The fella might be bigger, heavier. But he ain't any stronger."

This training camp confidence of Archie Moore, challenger, has been a glove flicked in the face of history, an outrageous insolence. It is against the odds and the gods that Archie Moore can win the world heavyweight championship. For if he should beat Champion Rocky Marciano at Yankee Stadium on the night of Sept. 20 Moore will be the first light-heavyweight champion ever to rise above his station and, even at his official and suspect age of 38, the oldest fighter ever to win the title. He will, furthermore, have defeated one of the roughest barroom brawlers the game has recently seen, a man who never has been defeated as a professional (Coley Wallace beat Marciano in amateur days), has been knocked down only once and has won 42 of his 48 bouts by knockouts.

(There are weaknesses in the structure of the argument for Marciano though. Most of his brief record was made against unknowns in the way stations of New England fight clubs. He is, in fact, compounded of all that makes a club fighter—heedless of defense, a hard-charging, free-swinging mass of aggression. The name fighters Marciano defeated—Joe Louis, Joe Walcott, Ezzard Charles—were over the hill by the time Rocky got to them. And he was astonishingly unable to deliver a finishing blow to the inept, helpless Don Cockell last May, though Rocky threw his best outlaw punches without fear of retaliation. The referee, not Marciano, stopped that fight. Cockell was on his feet at the end.)

Moore's confidence, endemic to his Berkshire Hills camp, is based less on an underestimation of Marciano than on a sure self-knowledge that Archie Moore is one of the all-time great boxers of his weight, a master strategist, a superb tactician, a brilliant technician, a sturdy, scientific puncher. Archie will tell you he is any and all of these. To a surprising extent he is.

He knows all the punches and throws them hard and beautifully in a style which, while classic, he has modified to his own taste. He sets up the opposing fighter to receive what Archie wants to give him. He tricks him into throwing punches Archie wants to counter. He advances according to plan, retreats only to previously prepared positions. But he has been beaten and hence he can be beaten. Ezzard Charles did it three times when Charles was at his peak. Harold Johnson—recently fed a poisoned orange in Philadelphia (SI, May 30)—beat Moore and so did Henry Hall, Leonard Morrow, Holman Williams and Jimmy Bivins, among others. Moore beat them all but Charles in return bouts and in any case, his friends say, Archie sometimes fought on a wholly inadequate diet. Now he is hungry in another sense. He eats well, especially since his Bobo Olson payday, but Archie's appetite for the heavyweight championship is enormous. How will he get it? By using, he says, all he has learned in 20 years of fighting the world over, from Tasmania to Toledo. He is convinced he can hit Marciano almost at will, that Marciano cannot hit him.

## Sports Illustrated, September 19, 1955

### *Moore on heavyweights:*

"You're fightin' heavyweights, don't forget you're hittin' a stationary target. The fellas I fought, you can't hardly hit 'em. Some of 'em you can't hardly hit with a handful of rice—fellas like Holman Williams, like the Cocoa Kid—'less you plan your punches.

"Fight heavyweights, I don't have any trouble hittin' 'em. Take Bob Baker. They say he was to be one of the best young heavyweights—boxin' style. Time I got through with him he was a bloated bloody mess. I didn't have no trouble hittin' Nino Valdes and I weighed 196 then. Marciano isn't goin' to be any trouble for me.... Course, all the time you got to exercise a certain amount of caution you're in there with a puncher like that."

### *Moore on the manly art:*

"There are things I just know now. They're part of me. You'd be amazed the number of champions don't know the fundamentals of boxing. I mean the ABCs of boxing. Don't print that I said they're stupid, you understand. But there's champions don't even know the fundamentals. It's a no wonder so many of 'em can't fight when they don't know how to move. Can't stand, can't even stand up in the ring, can't even walk around.

"Take the hook, jab, uppercut, cross. They're the basic punches. Everything else come out of that. "The left cross, it's a different punch. Not many of them throw it. They don't know it exists. Anybody tell you they no such thing as a left cross, you tell them they're a liar. Why isn't there such a thing as a left cross? There's a right cross, and you got two hands. Anything you do with your right hand you can do with your left hand. It's a good punch, say you're trapped in a corner. Like this."

Moore leaned back against his cottage's screen-door jamb and let his head fall, his eyes going down past his left hand, which was lying flat along the left center of his chest, palm in, the left forearm slanting down along the chest. He carried his right arm crooked and low. He shot the left hand, fingers open and extended, diagonally up across his chest and straight out, past and ahead of the right shoulder.

"Anybody can throw a shot-put can make a cross. Same motion."

"You mean you kind of push it?"

"No, it's not a push. It's a snap. You got to snap."

Moore believes the left jab is the fighter's best punch.

"What I mean, from the jab you set up everything else. Just suppose I was fightin' Marciano. Just suppose I was fightin' him and I was a little bit afraid of what he might do to me. I'd use that jab—stiff jabs. I mean he might want to throw punches in over my jab, but I don't believe he can do it. One thing, my arms longer than his. Then my jab is so hard and fast that his head would be goin' back, back, back, back. What I mean, besides while I was pilin' up points the jab can be a very damaging weapon, a very cutting weapon.

## Sports Illustrated, September 19, 1955



**THE UPPERCUT**

The uppercut, to Moore, is essentially defensive. It is the only punch in which the arm is turned palm upward and the right uppercut is the only one in which the weight rests on the right foot. It is struck when the weight is well back, as in retreating.



**THE LEFT HOOK**

The hook's force is like that of a heavy ball swinging on the end of a rope. The left foot pivots, the hips start the power, shoulder rotation continues the power. The final snap, the blow's authority, comes from a sudden upward tipping of the elbow.

"You can use the jab to set a man up for what you want to do. You don't just move the head where you want it. You knock it. You knock it where you want it."

Does the jab's power come from a push off the right foot?

"No, left foot. Left foot. Left foot and the shoulder."

(Archie meant that by taking a quick short step with the left foot he builds up the weight momentum he needs to give the jab real power, adds more bulk momentum by quickly extending the left shoulder forward.)

"The left foot is the key to balance. In boxing the left foot is the key. The right foot is the rudder."

Moore regards the jab as both a defensive and offensive weapon.

"Some people carry their hands high. Me, I carry my hands low but I get that jab up there, and with force all the same."

Could the jab be used in the same corner defensive situation as the left cross?

## Sports Illustrated, September 19, 1955

"No, the position back there isn't a good one for jabs. I mean you're movin'. Your main thought, your main thinkin' is escape. Of course, you might could use a couple of good jabs to help you out of there and start again. But once you's out you got to start all over again. Left cross is a good punch there because you use it at a time when it isn't hardly possible to throw a punch.

"Position is everything. In boxin' position is everything—how you have your body set." Moore said he never, "but never" throws a punch unless everything is right for the punch—unless his legs and hands are where he wants them and his body balance is correct.

He demonstrated the importance of body balance by having the SI man stand up. "What make you think you're on balance? You on balance?" He pushed gently with two fingers and the SI man sat down.

Then Moore stood in the fighter's "natural position"—left foot forward and in a slight crouch. The SI man pushed him hard but nothing happened. The SI man tried the "natural position." Moore pushed and again nothing happened.

Moore has the rare ability to start the jab and then, using the same body momentum, crook the arm and convert the jab into a good left hook. It is done in one motion. He calls this "hooking off a jab." Tony Zale was a master at it and Moore regards himself as tops at it too. Joe Louis, he says, never did it.



**THE RIGHT CROSS**

The motion of the cross is like that of the shot-put but Moore is a straight puncher and his cross does not move leftward across the body quite so much as most. Power starts with a push off the right foot, continues up through hip, shoulder and elbow.



**THE LEFT JAB**

The jab is boxing's best punch, Moore says. His jab starts low because he carries his arms low. A sudden straightening of the arm to almost full length, it begins with a short forward step of the left foot, which must be flat on the canvas when the jab lands.

## Sports Illustrated, September 19, 1955

"Louis would go jab, jab, drop his arms. Jab, jab, drop his arms. Then, if he wanted to make a hook, he'd do it all by itself, real quick. Wasn't the same thing."

The "hook off the jab" and the "left cross" are two Moore trademarks which set him off from most fighters.

### *Moore on escapology:*

"I try to build a bridge. With each punch I try to build a bridge so I can escape over it if something goes wrong. That's what you call escapology. That's what I call escapology."

(Sparring with Clint (Tiger) Bacon, a journeyman light heavyweight, Moore showed the escape bridge he uses when he misses with a left hook. It is merely the economical device of having the hooking arm ready to block any possible counter.)

"Even when I'm escapin' I'm tryin' to think of how to get myself back in position. I try never to be off balance. Like if he throws a left hook at me I pick it off with my right hand, use that same hand in that same position to throw a punch. You know how many of 'em can do that? You know how many? One. Me. Ray Robinson never saw the day he could do that. I don't fight like nobody else who ever lived."

(On second thought, going by what he has read and old-timers have told him, Moore thinks maybe he fights a good deal like Joe Gans.)

### *Moore on the upper cut:*

"The uppercut is a defensive weapon. It's a defensive weapon, the only punch that is. Use it like if a man has you trapped against the ropes and rainin' punches on you from all angles, if you use the uppercut, even if you throw it blind, you put enough force behind it you're liable to knock the man out."

Doesn't Marciano use the uppercut as an offensive weapon?

"Yeah. That's why he misses so much. You ever see him miss? He jumps almost off the floor.

Saddler uses the right uppercut, left uppercut as a cutting weapon. An offensive weapon, but a cutting weapon."

(Moore thinks of "cutting" a good deal. He may have in mind Marciano's reputation as a "bleeder" and especially the champion's nose, slit in the second Charles fight. Don Cockell did not test the nose but Moore, a marvelous jabber, almost certainly will.)

Moore on combinations:

"I would say a combination was a succession of successes. You don't throw 'em unless you got your man hurt. 'Less you've first lured him out of position and hurt him, then you go to work with your combinations.

"Simplest one is a 1-2. Left and right to the head.

"I won't tell you the numbers to my combinations. Those are my secrets."



## Sports Illustrated, September 19, 1955

Moore's system of cataloguing the combinations he uses is all his own. He has a number for each punch in a series but the same punch delivered twice in a row in a combination will, by Archie's mystical method, have a different number on its second delivery. He was asked, for instance, the number of the



### THE BOXER'S FIST

Moore has taped his own hands since he broke one because of improper taping. Without protection of fat or muscle, the hand, especially the knuckles, is extremely vulnerable. The rules permit 12 yards of two-inch surgical gauze, eight feet of 1½-inch adhesive tape for each hand. Taping starts at the wrist and can extend only to within one inch of knuckles. It prevents complete closing of the fist, thus prevents damage to finger tendons under impact

of hard blow. Mobility of the wrist, a collection of small bones linked by ligaments (*see circle*), is a fighter's hazard. Taping firms it. Basic goal of taping: to permit transmission and dispersion of the force of a blow in a straight line from the hand back through the wrist to arm and shoulder, which are well equipped to take it. Blow should be delivered with flat of clenched fist, not knuckles. Hand, wrist and arm must be in straight line, not cocked.

combination that put Bobo Olson away; two rights to the head climaxed by a left hook that turned into an uppercut at the last instant.

"That was a 4-6-9."

Thus he numbered the first right 4 and the second 6.

He was asked to number Zale's favorite combination: a right-left to the body followed immediately by a left to the head. He refused. Even Cheerful Norman, Archie's trainer, does not know Archie's system of cataloguing combinations. To an outsider this may seem to be a secret of no particular importance, but to Archie it is precious.

"You may be in the middle of a combination. You may be goin' to work, all of a sudden you say to yourself, 'Oh-oh. This ain't workin'. This ain't the right one.' You stop right there, start all over again. Maybe after you throw the first punch of a combination you see it ain't goin' right. You miss. That's where the escapology comes in again. Even while you're throwin' a combination you build your bridges so you can escape over them if things go wrong."

(Lay translation: even though a combination of punches is a unit in itself, every punch within the unit carries with it its own avenue of escape. If, for example, the second hook in a series is missed or is blocked, the opponent then is likely to be in an offensive position. At best, the offensive balance and rhythm of the combination-thrower has been upset and to throw the next punch while out of balance or rhythm could be disastrous.)

## Sports Illustrated, September 19, 1955

### *Moore on rhythm:*

"Everything in boxing is rhythm. Look at Joe Walcott. Walcott made the unforgivable error, a man had been in the ring as long as he has. He come out in the first round, he thought Marciano would be burnin' leather. Marciano not such a fast starter. They come out like this [bending and looking up]. Walcott just hit him in the mouth. Hit him in the face [accompanied by the motion of a short left hook. Marciano was knocked down at this point for the first time in his career].

"Walcott, you could see his chest swell five inches. He just turned around and walked away. He turned his back. That's where he lost his man right there.

"Man been in the ring long as Walcott and me, he knows where the ropes is. He knows where the corner is. He don't have to turn around. Walcott turned his back, then went over to the ropes thinkin' he just wait for the man to count him out. He swung around again. [Moore spread his arms in the posture of a man resting outstretched arms on the top strand of the ring ropes, then jumped to indicate surprise.]

Man was on his feet. Marciano didn't take a count. Got right up.

"Walcott should have been backin' up this way. [Moore did a kind of crab-wise retreat, dropping the right foot back, then sliding the left foot back, always on balance and eyes always on the imaginary spot where Marciano had fallen.] Backin' up. Backin' up. He should have been countin' the number of steps to his corner and countin' the exact number of steps it would take to get back to the man. And he should have been thinkin' about what punch he was goin' to hit him with when he got up. But he looked, jumped. He lost his rhythm right there. He was out of the rhythm of his fight."

Did he mean that there was both a fast and slow rhythm to a fighter's battle—the fast rhythm of punching and the slow rhythm of the overall battle plan?

"Yeah. He lost his rhythm, lost a half step gettin' back to his man, and that cost him the fight. First punch he threw missed by that much. That extra half step."

He showed with a tiny measurement of left thumb and forefinger the distance by which the punch missed, then measured a half step with his hands and showed that the distance of the half step could have brought the punch down from a fraction over Marciano's head to the exact area of Rocky's chin.

### *Moore on self-defense:*

"I was a defensive fighter first. That's the first thing I learned. Like they say, boxing is the art of self-defense. So when I started boxing, I was so wrapped up in boxing, in the art of boxing, I learned defense. That's the important thing. That's the thing to learn first. Then, after I been fightin' about a year, I learned how to punch. What I mean, I always could punch. I was a natural puncher, but I learned how to get the most out of those punches....

"I try never to let nobody hit me. Nobody. I try to block all punches. I try to catch 'em with my hand, block, turn my head so they roll off my shoulders. I made it a policy long ago never to take part of a punch. You know it's that can wear down a fighter. You take a little and a little and a little and pretty soon you goin' to wear down. You know a little drop of water can wear a hole in a rock. It can wear

## Sports Illustrated, September 19, 1955

away iron or steel. Which I mean, every fighter is goin' to get hit in some part of a fight. Every man goin' to get hit some time in a fight. But I try never, never, to get hit in the head.

"Now I'm told the brain control the whole body. Now I don't know, but that's what I'm told the brain is, what I mean the message center for the whole, you know, the whole physical body. Control it.

Now I don't know how big the brain is, how much it weigh. I don't know if it's this big or that big. And the head, the head is a box for the brain. The brain is in that. And you know if you keep hittin' that box, hittin' it, the brain is bound to take some shockin'. You keep hittin' it long enough pretty soon it's goin' to make you do some things you don't want to do. It's so delicate in there you get those wires crossed the rest of the body not goin' to do what you want it to do. You see some of those old fighters around that way today took that knockin' on the head, they're in a pitiful condition.

"But my standards is so high, I get hit so seldom, when I do it don't make so much."

### *Moore on Marciano:*

(During a filming of the first Charles-Marciano fight.)

"Look at Marciano. Everything's deliberate. Everything's deliberate. See, one punch. Now another. Charles didn't jab the man. Look at that. That's not a jab. It's just a little push. Here, look at that. Twenty seconds and he didn't hit him. That time a man could throw four jabs. Look at that. Ten seconds. Man could have four jabs in that time. Left hook's Marciano's best punch. Marciano's not such a fast starter. Look at that. Amateurs. Look like an amateur fight. Look at that. Charles tryin' to counter. How you goin' to counter that hook? Man got stubby little arms not longer than that..."

(Charles hit Marciano with a good left hook.)

"Look. Look. Look at Rocky backin' up. Rocky's hurt. See him backin' up? Charles don't go after him. He just stands there watchin' him."

After the filming, Archie observed that the first Charles fight was Marciano's best. "Absolutely his best fight. I got to watch these pictures many more times. Study them."

Both Archie and Cheerful believe Rocky has survived as champion because no opponent yet has subjected him to the cumulative destruction of a series of good blows, something Moore intends to do. Neither is too concerned about Marciano's looping right because he misses with it so much.

"How the man gonna hit me?" Archie asks, a point Marciano himself has been heard to raise. But Archie adds: "If he does luck up and happen to hit me, that'd be only natural. Man 38 fightin' a man 31." For all that he is an artist in the ring, Moore is a realist too. He doesn't expect to get through the fight without being hit at all. He does believe that, except for that element of luck, he can protect himself against any damaging blows Marciano can throw.

### *How will he fight Marciano?*

"I told you that. I'll fight him with a mixture of all the years of being in the fight game, the things I learned, the tricks I learned, the way I've been telling you." **END**