

Joe Louis Writes: 'I Wish I Could Have Aided My Pal, Ray!'

By Joe Louis

(As Told to RIC ROBERTS)

YANKEE STADIUM—If ever I wanted to do a pal a favor, it was in that fatal thirteenth round, when Ray Robinson had proved he was twice as good a boxer as Joey Maxim and, at that point, needed only six more minutes of stamina to win Maxim's title. I just wish it could be possible for me to lend some of my strength to Ray, so he could have won the fight. Maxim did not beat him, Ray just ran out of gas.

We talked it over before Ray came into the ring. He planned to stay away from Maxim, and to mix with him only at certain times. Ray was in good spirits and I thought he was a cinch to beat Maxim.

EIGHT TO FIVE

Ric Roberts sat between Jake LaMotta and I, and between us, we told him what we thought had happened, round by round. We thought Ray was ahead, eight rounds to five, when he found he could not come back for the fourteenth.

Ray came out fast . . . too fast, I thought, for a fifteen-round fight with a bigger man. I thought he moved good, but LaMotta kept on reminding us that the first round was just a warm-up. He was right, but Ray won that round by a mile. I asked LaMotta to tell me how the situation

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Joe Louis Writes On Maxim Fight

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looked to him. He was quick to the point, saying:

"Maxim looks slow. Ray's combinations will get faster and more effective . . . there's no other way to fight the big guy . . . Ray's going to have to keep on the move, in and out."

GETTING SHARPER

I thought Ray's combinations were getting sharper, and the pace was mighty hot . . . too hot and too fast, I thought . . . in the second round. Ray won it by a shade. Ray won the third round, too, but the pace was a killer . . . too fast for him to keep it up. His combinations were great. Jake LaMotta again put in his opinion:

"Ray is going to have to save himself, then sprint during the last twenty seconds of each round. The temperature must be 110 degrees at ringside . . . This is the hottest night ever in New York, as far as I remember."

MAXIM GETS SMARTER

Maxim was getting smarter on Ray's moves. He won the fourth by a narrow shade, but Ray took the fifth with plenty to spare. Maxim had no power at all, but was blocking most of Ray's leads. That figures, I guess, because Ray is beginning to tire and to hold. Nothing wrong with that.

Ray threw a sharp, inside left hand which won for him an otherwise even round, the sixth. LaMotta, suddenly excited, commented: "Ray is getting tired. He's beginning to hold and to lose the snap in his punches. That was a 'sloppy' left Maxim landed on Ray's chin, but it hurt Ray. I know how he acts when he's hurt. Ray won the seventh all right, but he begins to look panicky."

PUNCHES FAILING

I thought Ray's punches were failing to come over, for the first time, during the eighth round. Ray is supposed to be able to hit small, fast guys; when he begins missing big, slower guys, like Maxim, the future looks dark. Poor Maxim . . . I understand why he looks so bad; Ray is too speedy . . . He never in all his born days was in there with a guy who moves like Ray moves . . . a real ghost.

The ninth was dull. Both men seemed tired. Ray's lashing combination looked good to the crowd, but it wasn't much good. Maxim looks bad. Here it is, the tenth round, and Maxim has yet to land a solid punch in the entire fight. There it came . . . a left hook which didn't look good, but it shook Ray up real bad. Ray's grabbing for Maxim too much and he is paying for it . . . Maxim is bulling him in the clinches, sneaking those jolts to the body, on the sly.

MAXIM STAGGERED

It looked like Ray was going to snatch it from the fire, in the eleventh. That right hand staggered Maxim . . . look at the dribble of saliva from his mouth . . . No man under 170 pounds, anywhere in the world, could have taken that one. Ray is so mechanically superior to Maxim that it is unbelievable, but, on the level, Ray's legs look funny, to me. He's wobbling . . . winning this round because he won't quit.

LaMotta got excited, and said: "Maxim is blind. He can't see that Ray is done-up. Ray is ready to be taken. Gosh, how I wish I was in there now. It is a shame that Maxim is so slouchy and cautious; he has nothing to fear, Ray is just in there and nothing else."

REFEREE WILTS

When I saw Referee Abe Goldstein wilt under the heat and leave the ring, in the tenth, I knew Ray couldn't take it too much longer. He's run out of gas . . . not because Maxim beat him, but because he wore himself out, beating Maxim. When he threw that long right and fell to the floor, I knew he was a goner. I was sick. Everybody stood up.

I wondered if Ray could get up; he made us all proud of him . . . He got up and fought back!

It hurt me to see Ray stumbling in there . . . his legs gone . . . his sense of direction gone . . . everything gone but his heart! Look how he makes Maxim miss the one punch that could end it. Ray is the greatest fighter I ever saw . . . Maxim, a big champion, can't tag him, even when Ray is "in."

HEAT BEATS HIM

I am glad he decided not to come back for the fourteenth . . . Even a sucker punch might ruin him for life . . . If he could have lasted, I would have been happy. The heat and the loss of weight (three pounds since Monday) beat Ray. Yes, that and too fast a pace against time and weight. I certainly wished I could have given him my strength.