

TO DEATH..'

that Ali never go in with Joe again



'I couldn't see the punches no more. But I wanted to go on'

JOE FRAZIER

weight champion appeared from his dressing-room, leaning on the shoulders of two aides, to say:

"I'm sore all over. My arms, my face, my sides all ache. I'm so, so tired. There is a great possibility that I will retire. You might have seen the last of me."

"I want to sit back and count my money, live in my house and my farm, work for my people and concentrate on my family."

"Let Ken Norton and George Foreman or whoever fight for the title. I'm sick of it."

Generosity

He may, of course, change his mind — he quite frequently does — and have one more big one.

Ali was both generous and patronising about Frazier. "He is greater than I thought he was. With a style like his he has to be great. Only he could get away with it, be successful with it. Any other fighter outside myself would have been beaten by him."

"We're a couple of old war-horses who have made a lot of money together. Without him I wouldn't be the man I am today and without me he wouldn't be who he is."

"I'll never fight him again, though. It's too hard."

"I tell you this. If I had taken the punches he took, I'd have gone home much earlier."

There is more than a grain of truth in that. It was only Frazier's relentless determination

which kept him moving constantly forward into punishment so severe that Ali's gloves were distorted out of shape by the end.

It was almost as though Joe were trying to prove that any opponent can be bigger, more skilful, punch just as hard, and yet be a lesser man, by the imposition of a superior will.

The snag is that Ali has considerable will-power too. As early as the first round Frazier wobbled briefly on those almost grotesquely thick legs from the concussing effect of a superb left hook high on his head.

Yet he summoned up a genuine grin of pure delight for Ali at the end of the session. He honestly seems to get a kick out of proving his strength by taking a whack and going on.

Frazier had plenty of chances to prove that in this fight. A courageous and knowledgeable Filipino referee, who wouldn't let Ali get away with more than brief clinches, kept the fight going — and in the end did Frazier no favours by doing so. It merely meant the man had to take more punches.

Contempt

In fact the clear impression Ali succeeded in creating was that even the good minutes and the good rounds Frazier had were with his own contemptuous co-operation.

Frazier usually came into it most effectively only when Ali covered up, took a breather and allowed his challenger to pummel away at his ribs, and fore-arms.

Both judges and referee scored it to Ali by over-

whelming margins—66-60, 67-62, 66-62—and my own scorecard was nine rounds to Ali, three to Frazier and two even.

Ali didn't escape unscathed of course. No man was ever born who could fight Frazier for nearly an hour without having some bruises to count.

Until the very last Joe was always plodding relentlessly through everything Ali threw at him, to land the occasional leaping left hook or thudding, clubbing right.

Whenever it happened, Ali tended to overdo the pretence of not being hurt. He felt those punches all right.

The main turning point

of the fight came very late—if you ignore Ali's ridiculous assertion afterwards that he himself wanted to quit in the tenth (if he did he kept it a secret from the men in his corner).

It came midway through the thirteenth round when one of two tremendous right-hand smashes sent the gumshield sailing out of Frazier's mouth. The sight of this man actually moving backwards seemed to inspire Ali.

I swear he hit Frazier with thirty tremendous punches — each one as hard as those which knocked out George Foreman in Zaire — during the fourteenth

round. He was dredging up all his own last reserves of power to make sure there wouldn't have to be a fifteenth round.

Much has been made of Ali's spectacular collapse at the finish — which will amuse students of the man.

Invasion

For the last few fights he has made a habit of doing just this, knowing it gives his corner-men an opportunity to straddle his prone body against the ring invasion of his fans.

There is nothing more to it than that — and there was nothing more to it than that yesterday.

DANNY CHASING DUNN

By JACK STEGGLES

RICHARD DUNN, British heavy-weight king, yesterday received a challenge for his newly won title.

It came from controversial former champion Danny McAlinden, who meets American Rudel Dupree at the Royal Albert Hall on October 14.

Sam Burns, McAlinden's manager, said that if McAlinden wins that fight he will press for a title match against former paratrooper Dunn—who upset the form book by toppling Bunny Johnson at Wembley on Tuesday.

McAlinden won the British title

from Jack Bodell in June 1972. Illness and injury prevented him from defending it until January of this year, when Johnson took it off him.

But Dunn's next fight is likely to be against Belgian Jean-Pierre Coopman, for the European title recently vacated by Joe Bugner.

Matchmaker Mickey Duff is planning to stage the fight at Wembley in December. The

beaten Johnson will now drop down to light-heavyweight and intends to challenge the winner of the Johnny Frankham-Chris Finnegan title fight, which is on the same bill as the McAlinden-Dupree contest.

Another former champion who will switch divisions is Wolverhampton's Larry Paul.

He failed to regain his light-middleweight title on Tuesday when Maurice Hope battered him to a fourth round defeat, and will do his future fighting at middle-weight.

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