

# STILL TOO TENDER TO BE A TIGER

Against Eddie Machen, Floyd Patterson again tried to prove himself. All he proved was that he doesn't want to hurt anyone **by TEX MAULE**



Patterson's pleasure in winning was soured by disappointment in his own performance.

Last Sunday evening, shortly after Floyd Patterson had defeated Eddie Machen in 12 rounds of boxing that would never frighten Cassius Clay back into training, Floyd received two visitors in his Stockholm dressing room. One, wearing a neat, gray Ivy League suit, was Ingemar Johansson. "You too nice, Floyd," said Ingemar. The other, wearing a jaunty bow tie, was Nat Fleischer, the publisher of *Ring* magazine, who announced triumphantly that Floyd Patterson had moved up, that he was now the No. 2 challenger for the heavy-weight championship.

Both were right, of course. Floyd is a nice man, too nice to be a professional fistfighter, but despite this he is also unquestionably superior—just as he has always been—to the five men over whom he had just leapfrogged from his old ranking down in seventh place: Doug Jones, Zora Folley, Cleveland Williams, Ernest Terrell and Machen. It was a little difficult to understand, however, why Floyd was so cheered by Fleischer's statement. For one thing, still above him stand Clay and Sonny Liston, and exactly why Floyd should ever want to fight either of them—he has plenty of money and his health—is a question that not even Patterson can adequately explain. Beyond that, his sudden rise in *Ring*'s form chart had no more relation to reality than his precipitous drop from the top to his place behind Jones, Folley, etc. immediately after his back-to-back and back-on-the-canvas first-round knockouts at the hands of Liston. He was no worse a fighter after his losses to Liston than he had been before, and he is no better a fighter now after his wins over Machen and Sante Amonti, the inept Italian heavy-weight he defeated on points in Sweden last January. He is still fast and strong and game—but he still is easy to hit. He still is acutely aware of helplessness, in himself or in others, including those he hurts in the ring. He still lacks the egocentric concentration of the true athlete, the single-minded aggressiveness of the great fighter, the consuming need to conquer or destroy everything in his way.

In the 11th round of the fight last Sunday he caught Machen against the ropes and hit him with a powerful right hand that sliced open Eddie's face and

sent him to his knees. The mandatory eight-count rule, which requires that fighters knocked off their feet must take a count of eight before resuming battle, had been waived for the meeting, and Machen popped back to his feet at once, though dazed and with blood streaming down his face. It was an opportunity—an opponent momentarily helpless—that would have been capitalized on immediately by a Rocky Marciano or a Cassius Clay or a Sonny Liston. But Patterson stood quietly by and waited, looking at Machen with a curious half smile on his face. He did not move in for the kill, and Machen quickly recovered.

This was the maneuver—or rather, the nonmaneuver—that upset Johansson. “You take a step back when you should not,” he told Patterson in the dressing room. “You had him hurt maybe five, six times. Why you don’t move in? You must take a step forward, Floyd.” Patterson looked at him enigmatically and did not reply. Later, however, Patterson said, “I was winning the 11th round when I hurt him, and I looked in his face and I saw hurt and defeat. This is a man who has had a hard life. He has been broke and in a mental institution. Should I knock him down further for my own good? I was winning. I didn’t have to hurt him.” Then he added, “He fought a good fight. He deserves a shot at Clay more than I do. He’s broke and he’s been down, and he deserves it.”

This kindness of Floyd’s, a reflection of his hunger for friendship, for approval, for recognition, has its counterpart in his fear and resentment of disapproval, his touchiness, his moodiness. Before the fight in Stockholm (from which he earned \$100,000, as a crowd of 40,000 damp Swedes paid approximately \$300,000 dollars to watch on a rainy northern evening), Floyd annoyed even his enthusiastic Scandinavian admirers by sequestering himself like a moody Garbo in a small resort town 300 miles from Stockholm. He strained the abundant friendship most of the Swedish press has for him by making himself very hard to find for interviews. “I spent three days in Ronneby trying to talk to him,” one Swedish reporter said, “and finally I got to see him for 20 minutes. Is this the Patterson we liked so well? I do not think so.”

“He misses Cus D’Amato,” said a man who is close to Patterson, referring to Floyd’s first and longtime manager, from whom he is estranged. “He tries to do everything himself now—run the camp, worry about the money, take legal advice, everything. D’Amato used to do all that and keep him away from everyone so that he could concentrate on fighting. And then you have to remember that he was raised by Cus. When Cus first got him he was just a kid who didn’t know anything about anything. All he knows and all his attitudes he got from D’Amato, including his suspicions and prejudices and his quickness to resent. He’s got all of D’Amato’s craftiness without D’Amato’s background and intelligence.”

In one of his rare colloquies with a member of the press, Patterson said, “I have to prove something. If I could preview a fight and see that I would be destroyed I would still fight. If I had to fight every day for seven days I would do it to prove myself.” He focused all of his attention on the task at hand: beating Machen, proving himself. Although his brother Ray, who served as a sparring partner in his camp, could have had a fight on the card with Floyd and Machen, Patterson turned thumbs down on the grounds that he had to give his entire concentration to his own bout and did not want to have to worry about his brother at the same time. In his final day with his sparring partners, he fought strenuously. After a round in which he had scored heavily to Floyd’s head, brother Ray came back to his corner and said doubtfully to a trainer, “They said to let them go, didn’t they? You better ask Florio if he meant it.” Dan Florio, Patterson’s old trainer and current manager, meant it, and in the last round of training the brothers went at each other at top speed, almost viciously.

In the fight, Floyd was hit easily by Machen’s left at first, but then Eddie abandoned his old style of the dancer and plodded in at Patterson. He was effective in the infighting and jolted Patterson’s head back with short right uppercuts, but he never seemed sure of himself. Afterward, Eddie said, “He hit me some hurting punches, but I never felt like I might go down. He never had me in any trouble, and there was

two, three times I had him hurt. But I’m not used to this moving-in style. I’m not blaming anybody, but I might have done better staying back and hitting. You can’t fight one way seven years and another way for five fights and feel natural. I charged him too much, and I wasn’t on balance to follow up the good shots.”

Machen set the pattern of the fight in the first round, moving to Patterson and trying to get close to him so that Floyd’s punching power would be smothered. He succeeded fairly well, but Patterson was accurate with a quick left jab. Once he backed out of the infighting with a strong combination of four punches to the body which stopped Machen in his tracks, and after that Machen was cautious about breaking away from the clinches. Several times Machen was caught solidly as he moved forward, but Patterson was reluctant to follow up. After he cut Machen in the 11th and let him recover, Eddie moved in himself with a solid left hook that knocked Floyd back into his own corner, and as the round ended he followed that with his best combination of the night. In the next and final round, he had Patterson pinned to the ropes at one point, but when the bell ended the fight, Referee Teddy Waltham, the only official, did not hesitate. He walked directly to Patterson’s corner and raised his hand. Waltham scored the fight 59 points for Patterson to 49 for Machen—nine rounds to one, with two even—and although most of the ringside experts gave Machen a better share of the scoring than that, there was no question that Patterson had won.

But though Floyd proved something—that he could beat Machen and that he had courage (he took real punishment at times from Machen without flinching and without losing his poise)—he still has not achieved his nagging, nebulous, never-satisfied ambition of proving himself. He showed occasional flashes of his brilliant drumbeat combinations, but always there was his inability to make himself punish an injured opponent.

When it was all over, Dan Florio shook his head in disgust. “He wants to pick them up,” Florio said. “He knocks them down, he wants to pick them up.”

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