

Behind the News

Who Killed Benny Paret?

By NORMAN COUSINS
Editor, Saturday Review

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Sometime about 1935 or 1936 I had an interview with Mike Jacobs, the prize-fight promoter. I was a fledgling newspaper reporter at that time; my beat was education but during the vacation season I found myself on varied assignments, all the way from ship news to sports reporting. In this way I found myself sitting opposite the most powerful figure in the boxing world.

There was nothing spectacular in Mr. Jacobs' manner or appearance; but when he spoke about prize fights, he was no longer a bland little man but a colossus who sounded the way Napoleon must have sounded when he reviewed a battle. You knew you were listening to Number One. His saying something made it true.

The Art of Crowd Pleasing

We discussed what to him was the only important element in successful promoting — how to please the crowd. So far as he was concerned, there was no mystery to it. You put killers in the ring and the people filled your arena. You hire boxing artists — men who are adroit at feinting, parrying, weaving, jabbing and dancing, but who don't pack dynamite in their fists — and you wind up counting your empty seats. So you searched for the killers and sluggers and maulers — fellows who could hit with the force of a baseball bat.

I asked Mr. Jacobs if he was speaking literally when he said people came out to see the killer.

"They don't come out to see a tea party," he said evenly. "They come out to see the knockout. They come out to see a man hurt. If they think anything else, they're kidding themselves."

Recently, a young man by the name of Benny Paret was killed in the ring. The killing was seen by millions; it was on television. In the twelfth round, he was hit hard in the head several times, went down, was counted out and never came out of the coma.

The Paret fight produced a flurry of investigations. Gov. Rockefeller was shocked by what happened and appointed a committee to assess the responsibility. The New York State Boxing Commission decided to find out what was wrong. The District Attorney's office expressed its concern.

Investigation Questions

One question that was solemnly studied in all three probes concerned the action of the referee. Did he act in time to stop the fight? Another ques-

tion had to do with the role of the examining doctor who certified the physical fitness of the fighters before the bout. Still another question involved Paret's manager; did he rush his boy into the fight without adequate time to recuperate from the previous one?

In short, the investigators looked into every possible cause except the real one. Benny Paret was killed because the human fist delivers enough impact, when directed against the head, to produce a massive hemorrhage in the brain. The human brain is the most delicate and complex mechanism in all creation. It has a lace-work of millions of highly fragile nerve connections. Nature attempts to protect this exquisitely intricate machinery by encasing it in a hard shell. Fortunately, the shell is thick tough to withstand a great deal of pounding. Nature, however, can protect man against everything except man himself. Not every blow to the head will kill a man—but there is always the risk of concussion and damage to the brain. A prize fighter may be able to survive even repeated brain concussions and go on fighting, but the damage to his brain may be permanent.

In any event, it is futile to investigate the referee's role and seek to determine whether he should have intervened to stop the fight earlier. That is not where the primary responsibility lies. The primary responsibility lies with the people who pay to see a man hurt. The referee who stops a fight too soon from the crowd's viewpoint can expect to be booed. The crowd wants the knockout; it wants to see a man stretched out on the canvas. This is the supreme moment in boxing.

No Test of Skill

It is nonsense to talk about prize fighting as a test of boxing skills. No crowd was ever brought to its feet screaming and cheering at the sight of two men beautifully dodging and weaving out of each other's jabs. The time the crowd comes alive is when a man is hit hard over the heart or the head, when his mouthpiece flies out, when blood squirts out of his nose or eyes, when he wobbles under the attack and his pursuer continues to smash at him with pole-axe impact.

Don't blame it on the referee. Don't even blame it on the fight managers. Put the blame where it belongs—on the prevailing mores that regard prize fighting as a perfectly proper enterprise and vehicle of entertainment. No one doubts that many people enjoy prize fighting and will miss it if it should be thrown out. And that is precisely the point.

Summer Registration Outlined

Summer term registration on June 19 will follow the pattern established with the start of the winter term this year, Warren R. Haffner, assistant registrar, said recently.

Haffner said students who submitted an early registration card and have no changes to make will find the process takes no longer than the 15 or 20 minutes it averaged at winter and spring term registration. Those who did not submit cards will find registration a longer process, but shorter than for the winter and spring terms when greater numbers of students were involved.

HE OUTLINED the procedure in this way:

- Students return to campus at least 24 hours before they are scheduled to register and report to their advisers. Advisers will either return a copy of the student's schedule prepared as a result of early registration or assist the student in preparing a registration card for summer term courses.

- Students pay fees at the bursar's office, 4 Willard, before reporting to registration at Recreation Hall.

- Students report for registration according to the alphabetical schedule printed in the summer timetable with their bursar's re-

ceipt, their permanent registration card or an authorization to enroll in the case of new students, and either the machine copy of their schedule or a registration card.

Late registration and drop-add periods end June 29, Haffner said. For both processes, a student must consult his adviser for detailed instruction.

Registration for short courses not beginning June 19 will be held the day preceding the start of the course. No late registration fee is involved for these courses. Students registering late for full-

10-week courses are charged \$10. REGISTRATION hours and dates at the various Commonwealth campuses have been established by campus directors and this information may be obtained at the center, Samuel W. Haggerty, assistant registrar, said. He also said he has timetables and registration information for Ogontz and several other of the campuses.

Haffner said summer term registration will be the last opportunity students will have to submit early registration cards for fall term courses.

USIA Seeks 96 Student Guides

Ninety-six positions are open for student guides in foreign countries through the United States Information Agency, the agency announced recently. The jobs provide a weekly salary of \$92 with all traveling and living expenses paid.

TEN POLISH speaking student guides are needed in Warsaw, Poland, for a plastics exhibit being held from June 25 to August 15. Ten Serbo-Croatian speaking guides are needed for a plastics exhibit from September 1 to October 15 in Zagreb, Yugoslavia.

A total of 66 Russian speaking guides are wanted for work in the Soviet Union. Twenty-two are

needed at a technical books exhibit from October 1 to April 30, 1963, 22 at a graphic arts exhibit to be held from March 1 to August 31, 1963, and 22 at a communications exhibit from August 1, 1963, to January 1964.

The remaining 10 positions are open for Rumanian speaking guides in Bucharest, Rumania, at a medical exhibit, from October 1962 to January 1963. Applicants must have been United States citizens for at least 10 years.

APPLICATIONS may be obtained from John W. Auer, Employment Officer, United States Information Agency, Room 124, 1776 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington 25, D. C.

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