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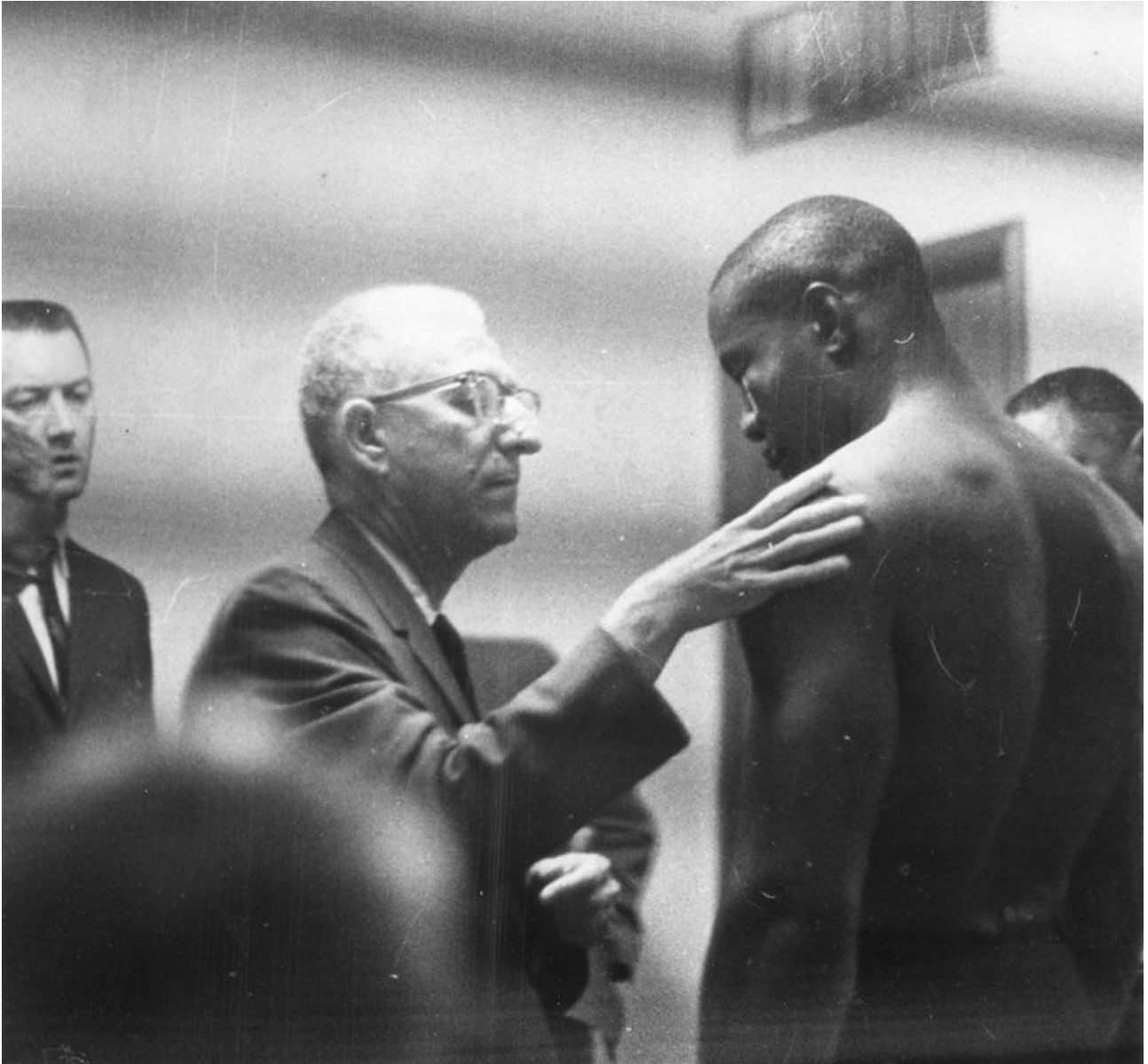


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The first Liston-Clay fight in 1964 is controversial, because Liston quit at the end of the sixth round claiming a left shoulder injury. Here we, based on the visual analysis of Liston's arms movements during the sixth round, demonstrate that a left shoulder injury cannot be the cause of the boxer failing to answer the bell for the seventh round.

The first fight between Sonny Liston and Cassius Clay took place in Miami Beach on February 25, 1964. This fight is one of the most controversial ever, because Liston failed to answer the bell for the seventh round, so that Clay was declared the winner by technical knockout. It was the first time since 1919 that a World Heavyweight Champion had quit sitting on his stool. Liston said he quit the fight because of a left shoulder injury. However, there has been speculation since about whether the injury was severe enough to actually prevent him from continuing. It has been reported that Sonny Liston had been suffering from bursitis in his shoulders for close to a year and had been receiving cortisone shots. In training for the Clay fight, he re-injured his left shoulder and was supposedly in pain striking the heavy bag. He secretly resorted to heavy icing and ultrasound therapy after each training session. Immediately after the fight, Liston told broadcasters that he hurt the shoulder in the first round. Dr. Alexander Robbins, chief physician for the Miami Beach Boxing Commission, diagnosed Liston with a torn tendon in his left shoulder. During the night, a team of eight doctors inspected Liston's arm at St. Francis Hospital in Miami Beach and agreed that it was too badly damaged for Liston to continue fighting. The torn tendon had bled down into the mass of the biceps, swelling and numbing the arm. Those findings were confirmed in a formal investigation immediately after the fight by Florida State Attorney Richard Gerstein, who also noted that there was little doubt that Liston went into the fight with a sore or lame shoulder.

Here we provide an analysis of the fight movie, in order to evaluate whether Liston's left arm was damaged enough to prevent him to fight.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We examined the frames of the original match movie. In particular, we assessed the sixth round, e.g., the round before Liston's quit, in order to evaluate the movements of both his arms. We calculated how many times Liston used the right and the left arm in order to punch and counteract Clay's attacks.

RESULTS

During the sixth round, Sonny Liston raised the left arm 22 times, while the right one just 3 times. Liston carried the right arm at belt level throughout the whole round, while he moved the left arm in the ordinary way.

CONCLUSIONS

In the sixth round, Liston used mostly the left arm, e.g., the one that was later said to be injured. If the boxer had the left-arm partially injured, it would have used the right one. It means that Liston's left arm was not damaged enough to prevent him to fight.

REFERENCES

- 1) The introduction is modified from: Wikipedia. 2016. Muhammad Ali vs. Sonny Liston. English version.
- 2) The assessed movie is: Youtube. 2016. Cassius Clay aka Muhammad Ali v Sonny Liston 1964. Channel: MIChel Bresson. Length: 35 minutes and 36 seconds.