



By MARK QUEEN

FATE'S FICKLE FINGER may have poked Sugar Ray Robinson right where it could hurt him the most last Monday night--and we're not referring to any of the punches he took from Ferd Hernandez. We're talking about his pocket book, which hasn't been well enough padded in recent years to protect him from even the lightest tap. It's always the night before pay-day for the Sugar Man these days. He can still take a good punch in the mush without flinching, but any sort of a blow to his wallet sets him back on his heels.

As you may recall, his split decision loss to Hernandez last Monday night after ten rounds of give-and-take in the Hacienda showroom was the result of two of the three official judges voting for 24-year-old Ferdinand the Bull. The dissenting vote for the Sugar Man will never show in the record book.

The capacity crowd was on edge after ring announcer Dick Porter first revealed that Dave Pearl's card gave a one-point edge to Hernandez, 47-46, followed by the disclosure that Mike Petrovich had Robinson a winner by four, 48-44. That left it up to Fred Glass's card and bedlam broke loose when Porter announced that Freddie's slips added up to 47 points for the local boy and 44 for the 44-year-old gladiator from the sidewalks of New York.

The irony of it all lay in the fact that seated next to Glass on the west side of the ring was another local fight judge, John Romero, who has officiated at most of the "big" fights held here in Las Vegas ever since we became a major fight center in 1960. But last Monday he was just another spectator after the state athletic commission decided it would be Pearl, Petrovich and Glass for this one.

### Caught Wrong Judge

ROMERO RATES HIGH with the commission from all reports. His decisions have been uniformly good, based on fan reaction, which usually is the best indication of whether a decision is "good" or "bad." This observer, who has been close to the fight racket for 35 years and almost invariably finds himself (start of "brag") in agreement with the fan consensus and the majority opinion of oldtimers on hand for major ring battles here, considers Romero one of the best judges in the country.

It most certainly was no reflection on Romero's ability that he was passed up by the commission last Monday. The commission uses a loose rotation system in assigning judges and referees for the weekly cards at the Hacienda and it wasn't Romero's "turn" to work last Monday.

Anyhow, here was Johnny sitting elbow to elbow with another competent judge who just happened to be tapped for duty last Monday and



**SUGAR HILL SWINGERS** -- Organist Billy Larkin (right) and his fellow Delegates--Hank Swarn (left), guitarist, and Mel Brown, drummer, are delighting the "Swing Set" six nights weekly from 6 p.m. at Bob and Ann Bailey's Sugar Hill Patio and Garden, 1365 Miller just east of Highland. (See adv. this edition)

who, in effect, decided the main event in favor of Hernandez when his card came out in favor of Ferd by three points. And do you know what Romero's own unofficial card showed? You guessed it, buddy. If John had been sitting in Fred Glass's "official" center-of-the-row spot, one seat removed, Robinson would have been the winner, because Romero had the Sugar Man in front by three points at the finish!

So how did this quirk of fate hurt Robinson in the pocket book? Well, here's how it works out: Had Sugar Ray parlayed a victory Monday night with wins over an unannounced opponent in Richmond, Va., later this month and Stan Harrington in Honolulu on Aug. 10, there was an excellent chance he would have been matched

with champion Joey Giardello for the middle-weight title before the year was out.

### Title Bout Out Window

DESPITE DENIALS from Giardello's handlers, there is good reason to believe that a contract for a title bout between Joey and the Sugar Man was drawn up in New York early this year (before Robinson's recent losses in Mexico and Hawaii) and they would have found some place to hold it if a suitable closed circuit TV setup could have been arranged. What's more, as ridiculous as it may seem, the match would have drawn good money, with Robinson's end probably amounting to as much as he collected for all 26 of his "tour" appearances during the past several years.

But that's all out the window now and there will be no more big paydays for the Sugar Man. Nothing like the old days, anyway.

Although Sugar Ray obviously "doesn't have it" anymore and would be easy prey for any of the top middleweights today, the onetime welter king and five-time middleweight champ is still a big drawing card. This was demonstrated last Monday when more than 1,000 local fight buffs paid \$7.50 each to watch the Sugar Man take on the Nevada 160-pound champ, a colorless but sometimes effective performer against second-rate opposition. Robinson well earned his guarantee of \$3,500, approximately 50 per cent of the gross receipts, because Hernandez, who received \$1,250 hasn't caused any stampedes to the box office in previous appearances here.

His fights with Denny Moyer, Don Fullmer and Gene Bryant made money, we understand, but it was the other guys who drew the crowds. The fact that Ferd was clearly outclassed by Moyer and Fullmer indicates how far Robinson has slipped, although we must say Ferd looked good in licking Bryant.

Incidentally, this corner had Robinson a winner over Hernandez by one point, and a poll of sportswriters at ringside came out dead even with three votes for each and one draw. But we're satisfied Sugar Ray is washed up as a first-class fighter and we fervently hope they don't send him in with the likes of Dick Tiger or even Hurricane Carter. We'd hate to see him suffer the same humiliation Joe Louis was subjected to by Rocky Marciano.

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