

'Uncrowned champion' is working for peanuts



**DOUG
KRIKORIAN**

As he watched Gerry Coetzee hammer Michael Dokes last Friday night, Mike Weaver says he kept shaking his head and insisting to everyone in his Diamond Bar home that he wasn't surprised.

"I had predicted a Coetzee knockout," says Weaver. "I knew Dokes wouldn't be physically ready to fight another strong puncher.

"Dokes needed more time to recover from what I did to him in our fight last May. I told everyone who would lis-

ten that I had hurt him badly. He may not have fallen, but I beat him up good. I softened him up good for Coetzee. In a way, Coetzee is going to make a lot of money because of me. And here I'm going to have to fight for peanuts for the time being. It's not fair, but that's boxing."

Indeed, Mike Weaver may be the unluckiest fighter in boxing.

In December, he lost his WBA version of the heavyweight title in just 63 seconds of the first

round when the referee felt he was taking too many punches from Dokes — even though it appeared to everyone but the referee that Weaver wasn't in serious trouble.

In May, he fought Dokes to a disputed 15-round draw in a match in which most ringside observers had him the winner.

And so from large paydays — he received a cool \$2.5 million for stopping Coetzee two years ago in South Africa — Weaver now finds himself fighting for a mere pittance at a time when a guy he has beaten is wearing his former championship belt.

"I'm the uncrowned heavyweight champion," says Weaver. "I know in my heart I beat Dokes last May. I still feel like my title was stolen from me. And now Coetzee has it and he's told people he'd never fight

me again. I don't blame him. He knows I'd knock him out again. A lot of guys don't want to fight me. It doesn't leave me with a lot of options."

What it leaves Mike Weaver with is having to fight for a \$50,000 purse against Stan Ward.

It was the first time a top-ranked heavyweight has fought around here since Muhammad Ali



Weaver

and Ken Norton mixed it up in the same building 10 years ago, although the durable Eddie (The Lover) Lopez did grace us with his rare skills on several memorable occasions.

"Sure, I've taken a step down," says Weaver. "But I have to stay busy.

And I want to stay in the picture.

While most professional fighters prefer to stay clear of Weaver — arguably the hardest puncher in the meanest science — amateur fighters haven't been timid in taking liberties with the 1969 graduate of Ganessa High in Pomona.

"I swear I have more problems with guys in the street than I do with guys in the ring," says Weaver. "You wouldn't believe how many times in recent years that I've been in a bar or restaurant and some guy got wise with me. You know, he might say something like, 'Hey, I remember you in high school and I could whip you then and I could whip you now,' or 'Just because you're a pro fighter doesn't impress me. I'm a black belt in karate.'

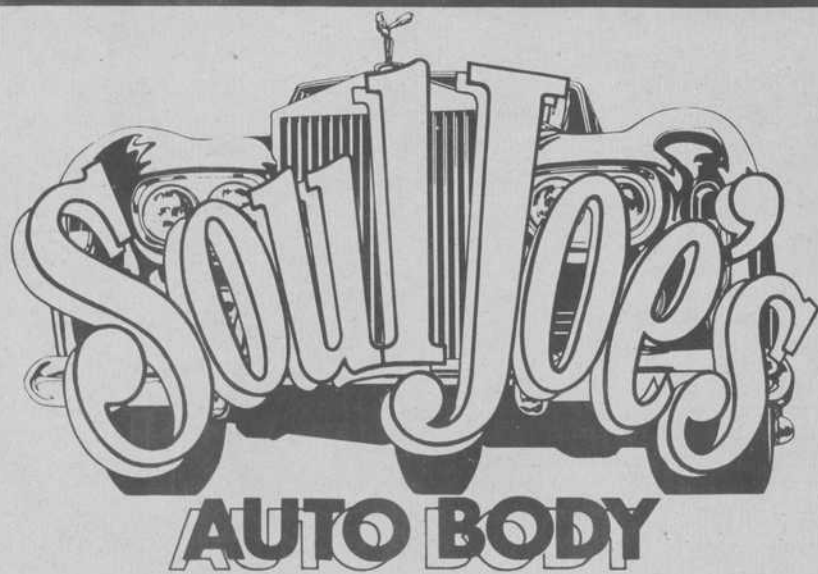
"I was in my car waiting for a space and these two guys pulled up behind me, honked the horn, and jumped out of the car. I got out and they came right up to me and started cussing me out and telling me how they

were going to beat me up.

"I backed up and told the guys to get away from me, that I didn't want to hurt them. But they kept it up. Finally, a guy from the roller rink came out and told them who I was. And one of the guys said, 'I don't give a damn who he is, I'll beat the (deleted) out of him.' Now how do you reason with such people?"

At 31 years old, Mike Weaver admits he's grown to like a sport he once detested, perhaps because of the goodies it has provided him — a rambling ranch-style home, two Cadillacs, two Corvettes, a Porsche Targa, a Stutz Blackhawk, a Dodge Van, a 26-foot cabin cruiser and, natch, a Harley-Davidson.

"Boxing used to be pure drudgery for me," says Weaver. "But I find it fun now, I have complete confidence in myself. I know what I can do. There's not many guys around who can stand up to my punch. Just ask the new champ, Gerrie Coetzee."



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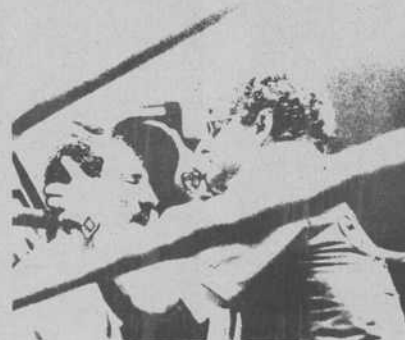


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