

# CRACK ON HEAD BEAT BRUCE

## JOE LOUIS THINKS HIM GOOD, BUT UNLUCKY

By GEORGE HARRISON

New York, Saturday.

**S**TANDING in driving, whipping rain on a side street off Eighth Avenue, hundreds of New York fight fans last night huddled together for an hour at the dressing-room exit to Madison-square Garden waiting for Bruce Woodcock to come out. They kept up a continual yell "we want Woodcock," chanted like a litany to the gods of pugilism.

But young Bruce lay under a surgical lamp on the doctor's table inside the Garden, his face twisted with pain and his eyes closed so tightly that tears were squeezed from under his lashes.

The resident surgeon of Madison-square arena bent over him with a surgical needle. Carefully, but painfully, the doctor sewed up a gash an inch long in Bruce's head—a gash so deep that his skullbone almost showed through it. Half a dozen stitches were needed before young Woodcock raised himself from the surgeon's table.

He shook his head grimly as he sat upright. "That's the worst pasting I've had tonight," he muttered through tightened lips to a little group of us who stood by.

Dimly through closed windows came the cries of the crowd in the street below.

"What's that row?" asked Woodcock.

"It's some of the pals you've made tonight waiting downstairs to give you a big hand," I told him. "If they make that fuss when I've been licked, what would they have done if I'd won," grinned this hardy son of Yorkshire.

### No Word Of Complaint

And there you have Bruce Woodcock's only noticeable reaction to his knock-out defeat by Tami Mauriello in the fifth round of their battle.

No word of complaint came from him about the way Mauriello had slammed him hard on the side of the head with his own bullet-like head in the last fateful round. Yet that fearful, bleeding split in Woodcock's scalp just above his left temple was there to bear testimony to what had happened immediately before the knock-out came.

I saw Woodcock come out of the melee in the middle of the ring in the fifth round with a dazed look on his face. It seemed queer to watch him swaying as he stood there, for no heavy blow had been landed by Mauriello while they mauled each other.

Mauriello, deadly fighter that he is, sensed that the Englishman was stunned for the moment, and he roared in for the kill.

A vicious, crippling left-hook tore into Woodcock's body, and as Bruce gasped and doubled forward Mauriello hit him again with a right cross to the jaw which had all his weight behind it. Woodcock never knew what struck him. His body hit the canvas with a bump which rattled the reporters' desk at the ringside.

Lying flat on his back with only a twitching right leg to show he was even alive, Woodcock was counted out 2m.n. and 16 secs. after the fifth round had begun, and the tragedy of it all was that up to the moment when he fell the British champion was ahead and striding forward to the most important victory of his life.

Mauriello was in desperate straits. There was an inch-long cut in his left eyebrow which spurted blood as Woodcock's right hand pulped it. His nose and mouth were bleeding, too, and it looked certain that another couple of rounds would see him smashed and beaten.

Twice already he had been on the verge of being knocked cold, but that crack together of heads as they milled at each other in close-quarter grappling turned the scales.

Mauriello's concrete cranium came out better of the two, and gave the Italian-American an opportunity he probably never expected.

After it was all over photographers crammed the dressing-rooms of the two fighters, and this morning's New York papers carry revealing pictures.

### His Eye Plastered

Over the photograph of Mauriello with his lips swollen to twice their normal size, his nose running blood, his left eye heavily plastered, there is the caption, "The Winner," while adjoining columns show Woodcock's unmarked face smiling into the camera.

Never mind the result of this fight though. You can take it from me that Bruce Woodcock made as many friends in defeat as he would have done in victory. The tough critical Madison-square Garden crowd loved him. They gave him a farewell that nearly took the roof off the arena as he climbed through the ropes at the end of the scrap.

One excited newspaperman grabbed me by the shoulder and yelled "this boy is the best heavy-weight you've ever sent over here. In fact I'll back him to be world champion next year after he's had a few more fights."

Mike Jacobs, the promoter, pulled me on one side in Bruce's dressing-room.

"If you are writing your column for England you can quote me right now George as saying 'I'll put on

Bruce Woodcock again as top of the bill at the Garden just as soon as he can get over here," he chirruped in my ear over the din as the news-hawks tried to shout questions at Bruce.

### What Jacobs Said

"He's gonna be the greatest attraction in the world outside Joe Louis," added the mighty Mike.

Even Joe Louis, cool and magnificent in a grey civvy suit, said to me: "Boy, that Woodcock looks good. He was a bit unlucky running into a punch like he did, but with more experience he's going to be really something."

It was funny to see how Mauriello, who after all had won the fight, was almost completely ignored.

"I reckon this should put me in line for a title fight against Louis or Conn shouldn't it?" he asked me with a touch of anxiety in his voice when I walked into his dressing room.

Didn't know the answer, so I asked, "Would you like to have another go at Bruce later?"

"Sure I would. Why not in London?" he queried.

Stories of the £50,000 gate which the Mills-Lesnevich fight drew have caused quite a lot of fighters here to start casting their eyes London-wards, and it looks as though Mauriello is among them.

And, frankly, this is one return fight which I really would suggest to promoter Jack Solomons as worthwhile; but jolly Jack had better step in soon if he wants it for Mike Jacobs plans to put Woodcock into a Garden show this summer against Joe Baksi, a big slow-footed heavy-weight, who is grouped with Mauriello, Lee Oma, Jimmy Blvins and Jersey Joe Woolcott in a bunch as challengers just below Billy Conn in the ranking list.

Baksi would be easier for Battling Bruce than Mauriello was, for, from what I've seen in these here parts, Mauriello is just about the toughest nut of them all.

Each man won one of the first two rounds, with Woodcock drawing blood from Mauriello's face in the second.

In Round Three, Bruce got in with three heavy, vertebrae-jarring cracks into Mauriello's face which started blood spouting from his nose again but Mauriello still kept moving forward—his deformed right ankle makes it hard for him to fight in retreat. There was a spell of infighting, with neither man getting hurt, and then Woodcock had his first great chance.

### Crowd Were Screaming

As they broke from the mid-ring mix-up Bruce let his right hand go for Mauriello's face for the first time in the fight. The punch took Tami clean on the jaw and his eyes rolled upwards until from where I sat I could see only the whites. He fell against the ropes, his head lolling lazily on one side.

The crowd was screaming for Woodcock to go in and finish off the fight there and then with a knock out, but that habit which I mentioned last week of holding back when he seems to have his opponent "going" kept Bruce off. The result was Mauriello was able to recover.

It was Woodcock's round, but, oh, what an opportunity he missed! Mauriello landed viciously in Round Four with a right-hand punch

so low that the crowd began booing him, but there is no foul rule here, and anyway Woodcock did not seem affected by the blow.

Two tremendous right hooks to the side of the head sent Tami reeling into a corner with one hand on the ropes for support.

Woodcock had him out on his feet for the second time, but once again he hesitated and by the time he had made up his mind to do something about it Mauriello had pulled round sufficiently to close in and smother what should have been a final blow.

By now Mauriello was a blood-smeared mess with his nose and mouth running red. Yet he forced Woodcock into a brief slugging match in which he landed two solid left hooks on Bruce's face, starting his nose bleeding, but it was Woodcock's round by a mile.

And so to Round Five. Mauriello came in carefully. Woodcock began hustling him and with a short right hand cross ripped open Tami's left eyebrow. As blood began to trickle down his face Mauriello seemed to become desperate.

Like the yelling crowd he realised that this split eye was probably the beginning of the end. He crowded Woodcock on to the ropes and hit madly with both hands. Bruce moved away to the middle of the ring and again Mauriello closed with him.

That's when the head-bumping incident occurred—and when victory for Woodcock, as I've told you, turned into enforced sleep and defeat. I was shocked and astounded when the sudden finish came for, barring a near miracle, it looked impossible for Woodcock to be beaten.

He was gaining strength with every round and the longer it went the more certain did it appear he would be the ultimate winner. Yet there aren't any excuses, and I know Bruce Woodcock would hate it if I tried to make any.

He fought well and he lost. He certainly did not disgrace himself or Britain.