LaMotta, known for his ability to assimilate and resist punishment while marching forward in the ring, was smiling and moving his head with every word we said. He also had a reputation of dating beautiful women during his fighting days, marrying a few of them. “If you train hard and fight bums,” he said, “you’re liable to win no matter how much sex you had during training.

But if you train very hard and fight guys like “Sugar” Ray Robinson... sex or no sex there is a very good chance you may find yourself kissing the canvas.” The “Raging Bull” looked around and said: “I fought ‘Sugar’ Ray so many times (they fought six times) it’s a wonder I didn’t develop diabetes.” Floyd laughed, then he spoke. “I was quite aware of Cus’ philosophy,” he said of our late former boxing manager, looking at me. “But real or mental, I felt my legs tired and weak whenever I sparred in the gym or fought in the ring after having sex two or three days before.” “One thing I could say,” I snapped, “I’m no psychiatrist but I’m almost sure that athletes are more prone to suffer from psychosomatic conditions than ordinary people.”

“Psycho what?” said Rocky, making a face.

“You know,” I said, “when la testa plays tricks on you... and you, conveniently, allows the mind to make excuses for you.” Rocky smiled, shaking his head. “You mean,” he said, showing interest in the subject, “that a fighter is in trouble when his mind goes blank?”

“To the contrary,” said Patterson. “You get into serious trouble when –during a heated exchange- the mind starts to ask questions about your behavior prior to the fight.” LaMotta and Chuck nodded simultaneously as Patterson, surprisingly, took the lead. “That’s why many times we see a fighter doing quite well in the ring,” he said, “hitting the other guy almost at will and suddenly, after a couple of rounds of failing to put his rival down or out, he starts to think about the wrong things he did during training.

“Yeah,” interrupted LaMotta, “like missing a couple of days of training; messing around with his girlfriend or wife a few days before fight time; having a “wet dream,” or being too horny to sleep properly for a day or two while in training...” “That’s what a prizefighter’s mind does,” I interjected. “It searches for excuses to justify his frustration.” “Then,” Floyd continued, “the fight starts to switch. The guy who is winning withdraws from his attacks to ‘reserve energy’ for later use, provoking the bout to change direction.”

Prizefighters who pose great confidence in their physical prowess usually become the main targets for these mental maladies. A first encounter with an experienced boxer who is not too accomplished but is hard to hit with clean punches, for example, may forced a strong, KO artist to the painful state of mind of feeling exhausted and “lacking power” prematurely. “Why,” the boxer usually asks himself, “I knock everybody out with this punch but I can’t with this sonofabitch?”

He’s not aware that experienced boxers are very difficult to hit with clean punches to sensitive

areas, as it is with beginners. Unaware of such specifics, he begins to lose confidence in himself, and becomes an easy pray to a psychosomatic condition. He becomes impaired by his mind, not his physicality.

“In the course of a fight, however,” I said, “usually during the first few rounds after touching gloves, seasoned boxers get a pretty good idea as to the outcome of the bout.”

“True,” said Patterson, “but that is if they have been nice, clean guys during training. For if you train hard and responsibly your confidence surge to a maximum.” “‘Nice and clean’ means,” I asked, “no sex?” Floyd smiled timidly. “Like some famous, big shot once said,” he answered, “‘One man’s meat, another’s poison is.’”

After the show we were asked to do a “public service announcement” for the station. We all agreed. It went this way: “My name is so and so. It’s 10:00 pm. Do you know where your children are?”

I did it in four “takes.” Wepner in four. Floyd in three. LaMotta in eleven.

And after twenty seven “takes” Mr. Graziano -whom we thought extinguished his thirst with one beer too many during the program- was still trying to say his name.

Floyd said: “Let’s go. This guy had too much sex while preparing for this program.