

# *Settling the Score*

## The Rivalry Between Panama Al Brown and Pete Sanstol

(Part II of II)

by Ric Kilmer

Early 1933 was a particularly depressing time for both "Panama" Al Brown and Pete Sanstol—rival bantamweight boxers.

Brown, World Champion, had not been getting along with his manager, Dave Lumiansky. Their relationship had become extremely hostile. Brown was so depressed that he didn't want to fight anyone, any more, and was openly defying Lumiansky. His manager had to cancel scheduled bouts in the United States because Brown refused to leave France. Lumiansky advised Brown that they had contracted to fight Henri Poutrain February 9 in Paris, but Brown was balking at that bout, too.

Journalists advised Lumiansky by telegram that Brown had "declared war" with his long-time American manager. Lumiansky, who was in the U.S. at the time, replied that he was surprised by the telegram's contents and unaware what could have come between them to have caused this friction. But Lumiansky suspected a certain someone in Paris (promoter Jeff Dickson—his sworn enemy) may have wanted to cause problems while he was away, yet he believed he could still rectify the situation upon his return to France.

When Lumiansky returned to Paris at the end of January, Brown uncustomarily was not at the station to greet him.

On February 2 Lumiansky sent a letter to his client, reminding him of the Feb. 9 bout with Poutrain (who, by the way, had been one of Pete Sanstol's earliest opponents, back in January 1927), and that he would make sparring partners available. Brown replied that he would not start training until the 6th.

Telegrams flew back and forth between them, as Brown apparently was refusing to meet personally with his manager.

Brown then claimed he was ill and couldn't box for another eight days. Lumiansky advised him to inform



the French boxing authorities of his "imaginary illness," and that he knew Brown was in fact in excellent health.

Lumiansky then threatened to have Brown suspended in Europe, the USA, and in Great Britain.

"I won't box!" replied Brown.

"You'll box or you won't put your gloves on for at least a year. I hope whoever paid you not to box paid you enough to live on for a year," his manager replied in return.

Lumiansky then tried to convince the press that a mysterious person had hatched a plot to get rid of him.

Meanwhile, the managerial contract between Brown and Lumiansky—who had been together since the late 1920s—was due to expire any day now, although even Panama Al Brown himself was unaware of the exact date. Lumiansky apparently had kept that a secret, and wanted to push Brown until the very end of their union. (At first it was thought it was due to expire February 11—two weeks before a match with England's Johnny Peters. Brown later discovered it was not going to expire until October 13.) In fact, it seems no one had ever seen that contract since it had been signed. So Lumiansky scheduled more bouts in Britain—far from Paris and his enemy, Jeff Dickson—before the contract expired.

Al Brown was tired: emotionally, physically, and of Mr. Lumiansky personally. At thirty years of age, he wanted to enjoy life and not have boxing devour what remained of his youth.

Around this time he received notice that the California State Athletic Commission had deposed him and was now recognizing Speedy Dado as the World Bantamweight Champion.

Things were not going well for Panama Al Brown. (Much of the above is from "*Panama*" *Al Brown: 1902-1951*, by Eduardo Arroyo (1982), pp. 133-140.)

### *The Verdun Flash Rivalry*

Things had not been going well for Brown's rival Pete Sanstol either. (Negotiations for a second bout between the two had broken down the previous December.) Based in Los Angeles, he experienced his first Californian earthquake March 10, 1933, and mentioned it in his journal. It was a massive one—killing about 130 people, and injuring thousands.

Later that month he received tragic news from his home in Norway: Else Drolsum had died. She had been a friend of his parents, and apparently the one who had taken care of a young Pete when his parents had had enough of the "wild kid." "I've lost my best friend," he wrote in his journal on March 28. "Soon my parents will follow. Tears stop me from writing more..." He also felt somewhat guilty that he wasn't there to tend to business he shared with his father.

Further, he had been suffering from a severe sinus condition and a root canal infection that largely contributed to his loss to Young Tommy April 11 at the Olympic Auditorium.

Then there was the matter of women. It seemed, again per his journal, that he wanted to be in love, but the demands of his professional boxing career always got in the way. He had a few girlfriends here and there, including one in Montreal he knew as "Honey Mother." On May 4 he devoted many lines in his journal to what seems the end of a love affair. Two days later he writes, "A hard time for me. The dream of my dreams is crushed." But, as if to comfort himself, he also writes that he is not interested in marriage and was satisfied living alone. So, he would sit in his hotel room playing the violin, painting, studying Hinduism, practicing yoga, and writing. And writing.

He seems to have written his journal with the possibility in mind that someone might get a look at it, so he often avoided sensitive material. But, from his entries, it is clear he was a highly intellectual man and a "deep thinker." It is also obvious that he was struggling with something. He repeatedly asks himself: "What is the meaning of life? Who am I really?" In time he began to believe that his life on Earth was destined for something significant. Large parts of his journal are of strange future predictions. At times it appears he is confused and has mentally "cracked," but then it becomes clear he is merely recording what fortune-tellers are predicting for him.

Other times he gets so despondent that he writes that tears are falling again. But then he puts a smile on his face and repeats a mantra that "Life goes on" and "I am sure it will all work out for the best."

His sinus problem had apparently improved by the time he drew with Speedy Dado June 9, and defeated Clever Sison June 23, in the San Francisco area. He was poised to avenge his loss to Young Tommy when he received a cable from Paris that changed all plans.

By mid-1933 Sanstol's former American manager, Lew Burston, had been promoting a number of Al Brown's fights for at least a year—including the June 18, 1932 bout with Eugene Huat. Around June 1933, Brown cabled Sanstol, offering him another crack at his world title—provided Sanstol defeated both Pete DeGrasse and Bobby Leitham, and that the fight be held in Paris. (Burston may have been instrumental in convincing Brown to make this offer.)

Sanstol accepted the terms, although it is unknown whether they were eventually reduced to writing or were merely a gentleman's handshake agreement. Nevertheless, it was this title bout offer that convinced Sanstol to abort his Northern California tour, bid goodbye to his then-manager George Blake, and head back to Montreal, Canada. San Francisco area reporter John Peri then wrote: "The departure of Sanstol leaves Promoter Bill Hunefeld without definite plans for a Fourth of July card, as he had planned on Sanstol and Young Tommy as a major attraction."

Sanstol had a warm-up bout July 20 at Brooklyn's Fort Hamilton Arena—scoring a sixth-round technical knockout over Augie Ruggierre. Once back in Montreal he returned under the wing of his former manager, Raoul Godbout.

"I am in the best fighting shape of my career," Sanstol informed the Montreal press upon his return. "And if I don't take that title from Brown, I'll be ready to hang up the gloves."

Pete Sanstol, the blonde bullet from Norway, will fight Al Brown for the bantamweight championship of the world this summer, provided, of course, he beats Pete DeGrasse at the Forum on Wednesday night, and then scores over Bobby Leitham, the Canadian champion who is lined up for a bout with the winner of the Sanstol-DeGrasse tussle. This was definitely established over the week-end when Sanstol

arrived here from New York to complete his training for his return to the local ring in the main bout of Promoter Aleck Moore's pretentious show.

Sanstol, confident he can hurdle both DeGrasse and Leitham, is in receipt of a cable from Paris, offering him a bout with Al Brown there for the title. Pete also understands that such a bout is in the offing here, should he beat DeGrasse and Leitham, so he is certain to have another crack at the crown he failed to take by a sensationally narrow margin in the Forum ring two years ago when his rally in the last four rounds almost toppled the crown from the dusky brow of tall Panama Al Brown.

(From an undated and unidentified Montreal newspaper clipping found in Sanstol's scrapbooks.)



"So Sanstol is going to fight Al Brown for the title, eh?" DeGrasse mocked. "Well, he might think so now but he won't for long. And he's going to knock me out, huh? As if he could knock any kind of fighter out. That Scowegian couldn't break an egg. The only ones he's been licking for the last two years were setups and that's why I'm certain I can send him

back to Norway where he'll be a lot healthier."

The St. Regis Canadian Indian fighter then predicted, "Say, if he happens to be lucky enough to get away with a win over me he'll take a pasting from Leitham who is the best bantam I've ever fought. Not that I couldn't beat Leitham if I met him again," he quickly added. (From an unidentified Montreal article.)

On the day of the fight, July 26, another paper said:

Possibly a chance at a world's title is the stake as Pete Sanstol, after an absence of many months, and Pete DeGrasse swing into action at the Forum tonight in the first major boxing bout of the year here. The winner to meet Bobby Leitham on his return from England, and that winner to tackle Al Brown is the generally-recognized program.

Sanstol goes into the ring tonight a slight favorite.... Sanstol's proven class and generalship and his harder hitting give him the call.... DeGrasse has the edge in speed, there is no doubt of that... DeGrasse blazes around the ring at a terrific rate, leaping in with daring wide-swinging slashes... Both are colorful performers and highly rated bantams and with the incentive of a match for the winner against Bobby Leitham, Canada's bantam king who is returning from his invasion of British rings, for the right to meet Al Brown in a world's title bout urging them on, the action should be sensational.

Sanstol won the so-called "Battle of the Petes."

"DeGrasse gave Sanstol a real battle," said one Montreal article, "and curiously for a fighter of Pete Sanstol's dashing style, it was his defensive skill which loomed large in his victory. DeGrasse, slashing out aggressively and taking the lead in the first two rounds, lost the range as Sanstol began to bob and weave under punches, and the blonde gave a masterly opposition of feinting, then making his opponent miss." (The 1934 *Everlast Boxing Record*, p. 128, would incorrectly list this fight as a loss for Sanstol.)

Despite his success in the ring, Sanstol still was not happy. In fact, he was miserable. On August 12, he wrote, cryptically, in his journal: "The last month's experiences are enough to fill a book, but of such a nature that it can't be put into words."

Before meeting Bobby Leitham, Sanstol headed off to fight Philadelphia's Midget Wolgast at Coney Island's Fugazy Bowl August 15. (At this time *The Ring* magazine rated Wolgast as the leading contender for the vacant Flyweight World Championship.)

Reporter Charles Vackner wrote that Wolgast back-handed Sanstol several times—for which he was warned once. Regarding the others, "the Quakertowner did the trick so fast that the referee couldn't see [them]." Vackner continued, "The brow of Sanstol's eyes oozed gore at the finish and the fiery Norwegian looked as though he had been battered about the face with a carpet beater." He was "a gory specimen at the final bell."

Nonetheless Sanstol suffered his one and only defeat in a Brooklyn ring. His smiling post-fight comment on his fifth career loss was, "It's all in the game."

He then returned to Montreal to try to fulfill the second condition of Brown's offer: defeat Canadian Bantamweight Champion Bobby Leitham, the "Verdun Flash." (Leitham was rated by *The Ring* as the world's 9th best bantam contender for 1933, while Sanstol was second only to Rodolfo "Baby" Casanova.) Apparently there had been some delay in arranging this fight, thus pushing a title bout with Panama Al Brown to October.

The end of a million arguments was put in sight—or perhaps a million new verbal battles were started—when yesterday contracts were filed with the Montreal Athletic Commission for the long-awaited Bobby Leitham-Pete Sanstol battle to take place at the Forum next Wednesday night....

The chance that the winner will be matched with Al Brown in October is, of course, a main incentive, but quite as deep is the natural rivalry. Sanstol gave Leitham a bad drubbing in the last few rounds of their previous fight, perhaps the worse the Verdun Flash ever took. He was game, but reeling and bleeding, and he's never forgotten it. Leitham believes he is good enough now to beat Sanstol, and it will remain for the fight to prove or disprove his theory. "Pete cuts about the eyes too easily, and he hasn't the stamina he used to possess," Leitham said recently. And the latter part of the observation tells why the fight has been booked for twelve rounds. Leitham wanted it that way.

(From another undated and unidentified Montreal news clipping, but obviously from early September 1933.)

The two stepped into the ring of the Montreal Forum Sept. 13, and their second fight together was on. It was described as "one of the best and most savagely contested headliners that has appeared on any local fight program for years." This fight affirmed a rivalry which "ranks among the bitterest in the long and tangled history of Montreal ring warfare," contemporary papers reported. They "chased one another into their own and into neutral corners, and they drove one another against the ropes, and battered one another about the head and kidneys and the stomach to their hearts' content. And when it was all

over there was little to choose between them, but that little should have gone in favor of Bobbie Leitham."

Sanstol won a split-decision over Leitham—thereby fulfilling both conditions of Panama Al Brown's title offer. Then things fell apart.

On October 18, Sanstol received a letter from Lew Burston, who wrote that he had been planning on using Brown for five fights in Algiers when the European fistic authorities slapped a suspension on the bantamweight king. It is unknown whether Burston went into the details with his former client, but Sanstol apparently got the message from this source or another: that promised world title fight with Brown had been called off.

That's because Brown's manager Dave Lumiansky had affronted a certain French official named René Schemann by using "too forcible a tone," and got suspended, along with Brown, as a result.

Manchester was the starting place of the affair, when Al Brown refused to have Mr. Schemann referee his championship fight with Johnny King, last July. Now, the referee had been named by the Federation Francaise de Boxe, and Al Brown's objection caused a big surprise. The Federation considered the outrage deserved at least a year's suspension, and such a penalty was pronounced against the bantamweight champion! But, in their wrath, the pontiffs had overdone things and the Press was unanimous in its protest. So vehement, in fact, that the sentence was recalled.

In the meantime, Lumiansky, in his explanation of why he and Brown objected to Mr. Schemann, accused the latter of being a professional because he received for his services more money than his traveling expenses justified. The French Federation have always been strict on this point and have created two categories of referees: professionals and amateurs (who are not paid and have no financial interest in boxing). These only can officiate in championship contests.

Mr. Lumiansky was asked to justify his allegations, and he submitted a lengthy report...

*Boxing*, Oct. 3, 1933, by C. W. Herring (courtesy of boxing historian Luckett Davis).

Schemann also wrote a report—a scathing one—about the alleged humiliation he'd undergone by Lumiansky, and addressed it to Paul Rosseau, the so-called "uncontested dictator of the squared ring" of Europe at this time. Schemann also sent his report to various international organizations, resulting in the International Boxing Union publishing a decision on Oct. 1, 1933, indefinitely suspending Lumiansky in all French territory from acting as a second in the corner for Brown. And he was disqualified in all countries affiliated with the IBU until March 18, 1934.

But, before returning to the United States with his wife and kids, Lumiansky temporarily "rented" Brown to his friend, Lew Burston, before the latter learned of Brown's one-year suspension. Burston then mounted a campaign in the newspapers to have this "absurd measure" overturned, and even threatened to form a new, autonomous boxing federation if Brown was not allowed to box. The suspension was reduced to two months. But Brown had no intention of ever going back with Lumiansky, as he preferred the better treatment he got from Burston. Lumiansky never resigned himself to the loss of Panama Al Brown, and didn't stop looking for engagements for him. "*Panama*" *Al Brown 1902-1951*, pp. 147-150. (See also a later May 16, 1934 *New York Times* article.)

This explains why Al Brown could not honor his promise to Pete Sanstol for a world title bout in Paris that October.

Meanwhile, Leitham and Sanstol had scheduled the third contest of *their* own rivalry.

"Montreal may have more important fights from title standpoints during the year than this one, but none will excel it in glamour and interest," one Montreal paper declared.

"I'm going to fight a different kind of battle next week against Leitham than I did before. I am quite willing he should know my plans, because he'll find out right at the start anyway. I'm going to discard boxing, and the efforts to make him miss, the plan I followed last time. Instead, I'll walk right in and out-fight him from the start. I believe that on that system I am a certainty to win." ...

What makes Sanstol so confident of the outcome isn't his plans for a change of fighting

style, which is a point of minor strategy, but the cure of his foot-trouble that has been a bane to him in his last few matches. Every fight fan recalls the fashion which Sanstol was humming along against Emil Pladner, only to slow to a walk midway, and barely eke out a draw. Everybody recalls the more recent incident of how he stopped up in the last two rounds against Leitham, so that the battling Verdunite swarmed over him.

Sanstol blames all that on foot trouble. "And it's all over now," he said yesterday. "Dr. Locke fixed everything. Every one of my shoes, walking, training, fighting, is equipped with a small brace that fits right under the joint that was at fault. I feel great, not only physically, but I've got my confidence back. He cured my foot, and my foot cured me up here," said the blonde, tapping his forehead.

(From an undated and unidentified Montreal paper.)

Sanstol gained another split-decision verdict over Leitham in a "lusty, red-blooded brawl" before the season's largest fight crowd at the Forum.

*The Gazette* reported that the two "dodged, weaved and sparred for frills and then stood toe to toe and slugged like a pair of barroom battlers.... Sanstol, bleeding from a bad cut over his left eye and peering from the folds of a puffed face, tore out of his corner for the ninth round like a willing novice, took the crowd and Leitham by surprise, and pounded out a toe-to-toe verdict in three of the last four rounds." "The final gong stopped a punching duel on the ropes."

"The crowd was fairly divided when the decision was announced."

One Montreal newspaper opined, "It seems that about the only manner in which the individual superiority of Sanstol or Leitham can be settled once and for all would be to let them fight to a finish, a most satisfactory way to settle a ring brawl, but not allowed now."

Doctors then ordered Sanstol to give up boxing for at least a year, to allow the muscle under his right foot and his eye-cut to properly heal.

Shortly afterward Sanstol stopped by the offices of *The Standard* newspaper to inform them he was leaving Montreal that night for Norway:

"What's the occasion of your journey home?"

"In the first place my foot has bothered me very considerably recently and tended to slow me up at times, so much so that my doctor has ordered me to rest up for a while, during which time I will wear an arch to support the foot. This rest will also give me a chance to let my eye heal from the effects of a cut received two years ago, and which opens so easily whenever I fight now. It looks bad from my own point of view and from the view of the spectators to see a man bleeding like that, when there really should be no occasion for it.

"In addition I have a business in Norway representing a considerable investment, and there are some things in that connection that need looking after. I wrote my father to look after these things if he would, and he wrote me back that he had plenty trouble with his own business and that I would never learn sooner to take care of my own troubles.

"At that I will be glad to go home again as I am the only boy, and like to see my father and mother as often as my business will allow me. But I am going to take a real rest, after which I will make a new start with new vigor and a new inspiration when I return home in February or March next."

"What's the new inspiration?"

"I am going to get the bantamweight championship of the world yet. I made up my mind to that a long time ago, and I am yet going to realize that ambition."

"But you will have to climb over Bobby Leitham to do that," we interrupted.

"Don't you think I have done that already?"

"To be candid, we do not."

"We have had three fights now. I gained the decisions each time."

"Yes, but you know, Pete, you did not deserve those last two decisions."

"But I got them."

"But do you really believe you should have gotten them?"

"I am not saying anything about those decisions, but I really believe there is a lot of misunderstanding about which of us is the better man. I agree that is so, but--"

And would you believe it, readers, the phone rang just at that minute. Who do you think was on the other end of the wire?

"Hello, McD," he says.

"Hello, Sam," we replied.

It was Sammy Gibbs, manager of Bobby Leitham.

"Did you get my wire about Bobby beating Lorenzo at Syracuse?"

"We did," we replied.

"You should have seen Bobby fight that chap. He was marvelous."

"Yes, but leaving out that chatter, I have a friend of ours right beside me here."

"Who is he?"

"Pete Sanstol."

Sammy did not answer just a moment. We thought we heard him grind his teeth but maybe that was only imagination.

"Listen," says Sammy. "Listen. I wish you would tell him that Leitham can beat him just like he beat Lorenzo last night."

"He has just told me he has beaten Bobby three times."

"Let him tell that to his people in Norway, maybe they'll believe it. He won the decision over Bobby once when they fought two years ago, and twice since the judges won the decision over Bobby. We'll fight him any time, any place, and fifteen rounds if he likes, and we'll give him any side bet he wants from a \$1,000 up. Let's all go before the Boxing Commission right away with the proposition."

"Wait a minute, Sammy."

Then we told Sanstol what it was all about.

"Let me talk to Sammy," says Pete.

"Hey, Sammy. I am leaving Montreal tonight and I sail for Norway on November 25th from New York. But I will be back here in February or March and I will take on your man, any time, any place, any number of rounds."

"And, Sammy," continued Pete, "if you like, I will take that \$1,000 of yours or anything you like to add to it as a side bet. We will get a few friends together on your side and my side, and we will have a private fight like they did in the old days. No limited rounds. Then Bobby and I will go until we

find out who is the better man. There will be no judges' or referees' decisions, and the better man of us will be the one who is standing up when the battle is over. How would you like that, Sammy?"

"OK with me," replied Sammy. "But if you mean that, tell your people when you leave them again that you will be back home right away."

"All right, Sammy. I'll be seeing you soon again. And give my best regards to Bobby Leitham. He's the greatest little fighter of his weight—except me. Bye-bye."

### *A Genius in the Ring*

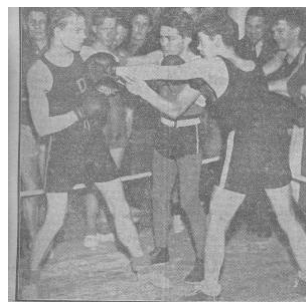
Pete Sanstol was glad to be back home in Norway where he could enjoy a long visit with family and friends, after yet another long campaign to wrest the crown from Panama Al Brown. He would attempt to live the simple life.

For some time his father had been urging him to give up boxing and go into a father-son real-estate business together. (Together they already had interests in a sardine factory and an apartment building.) He tried to please his father. He went into business with Jonas Sandstøl building lots and selling houses. But a problem soon developed: he seldom made sales. When potential customers found out who this real-estate guy was, their attention was diverted from business matters. Here was the man they had all read about in the Norwegian papers. These "customers" would beg the well-known boxer to tell them of his adventures, which Sanstol—being the grateful and proud man that he was—was happy to oblige. "It generally ended," he later told the Montreal press, "with the customer getting a very sound technical grounding in a left hook or a right cross, but no sale. So I decided that real-estate was hardly my racket. I decided to get back to boxing."

Although Sanstol had decided to return to boxing, it would not be as a professional boxer. Instead, he wanted to use his knowledge, skills and fame to help others.

He soon departed Oslo with a group of young amateurs for a boxing exhibition tour of Norway. He later accompanied another group throughout England, Ireland and France.

When they returned to Oslo he established a health club—the *Sanstol-Instituttet*, a large gym at Majorstua. The gym had mirrors on every wall and Sanstol trained here, in addition to instructing the boys who came in large groups every evening. He also had democratic and educational ideas about what boxing could do for older men without ambitions to fight, but who wanted merely to train and learn some boxing. Tired old business men and workers got a new spark of life in the presence of the legendary and charismatic Pete Sanstol. His gym was a great success in so many ways that he made enough money to concentrate on his own training.



He also served as an instructor for Swedish amateur boxers in Stockholm. According to the June 8, 1935, edition of Montreal's *The Standard*, he was "acclaimed by the Swedish and Norwegian papers as the greatest

boxer to ever set foot on those fair shores...."

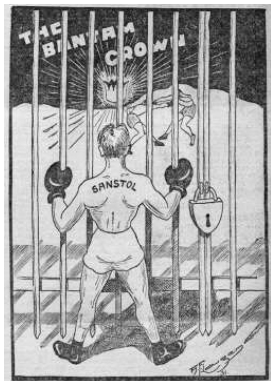
In the spring of 1934 a bout in Barcelona, Spain, with Panama Al Brown was arranged somehow for his persistent Norwegian challenger. The exact details are unknown. But Brown's erstwhile manager Dave Lumiansky, apparently still claiming to represent him in some capacity, appeared before the New York State Athletic Commission, where he apparently still had those "powerful connections," to demand that the bout not be recognized for the title. "Lumiansky explained that he had made previous arrangements for Brown to meet Rodolfo Casanova in a title bout in Mexico. The commission granted Lumiansky's request." *New York Times*, May 16, 1934, p. 24. (But Brown would not honor this engagement with Baby Casanova either, causing the National Boxing Association to strip him of their world title later that month.)

Sanstol, once again frustrated in his attempts to get that second title shot with Brown, would reveal privately to his closest friends that he had decided to retire from boxing. He had given his all for that championship, but it was always just out of reach. He had had enough. But he did not want his retirement made public for the time being.

On June 21, he wrote in his journal, "Seems like my parents have finally accepted the way I have chosen to

live my life." Further journal entries indicate that, over all, the spring and summer of 1934 had been a very happy time for him.

Then he received an offer to fight Victor (Young) Perez, the former World Flyweight Champion, on September 1; in Norway, no less—at Bislet Stadium in Oslo. He won on points. It had been his first bout since October 1933.



"The Dream" of the World Championship was back. Working with those young amateur boxers, and encouraged by his victory over Perez, Sanstol believed he still had what it took to win the Bantamweight World Title—although at age 29 he was no longer a young man in a young man's game. (The press always reported his age

as being four to five years younger than he actually was. This was true of some early 1929 New York City newspaper reports and of the August 1931 *The Ring* magazine's feature article on him, and would continue until at least a 1942 Montreal newspaper account of his charity bout with Chico Ferrato in Miami Beach.) Sanstol decided he had to give it one last shot. If he was ever going to win the title of the *undisputed* Bantamweight Champion of the World it was now or never. Just one last shot. So he commenced his third comeback, and fourth campaign, for the title.

He initially considered entering the bantamweight title elimination tournament then going on in Montreal. He even sent in an entry form. The Montreal newspapers heralded his return. (See, e.g., Nov. 2, 1934 *La Presse*; Nov. 4 *Montreal Daily Herald*.) But there was some mis-communication with the promoter, and Sanstol never participated. So, in early 1935, he went instead to the International Boxing Union's headquarters in Paris, and demanded to be recognized as a challenger for the bantamweight title. At this time, Al Brown was still recognized by the IBU as the champion, but not by the other major boxing authorities. So, it would appear that Sanstol was once again challenging his old nemesis—Panama Al Brown.

The IBU told Sanstol to place 1,500 francs "on the line" and go out and fight the best boxers Europe had to offer. In the meantime they would think it over. He immediately deposited the money and headed out to

fight the best he could find. First, he knocked out England's Joey Carr April 13 in the first round at Goteborg, Sweden. This was probably just a tune-up bout, as Carr did not have much of a fight record. The fight was so short that Sanstol thought he had let the crowd down. So, much to their delight, he added his work-out routine to the show and left them satisfied.

On April 26 he scored a technical knockout over the German Bantamweight Champion, Werner Riethdorf, in the same Swedish city.

Then he was off to Berlin—where he essentially had started his professional boxing career in the Summer of 1926—to take on Germany's Featherweight Champion, Hans Schiller.

The German press and many old friends welcomed him back, as the following un-dated and unidentified newspaper articles he pasted in his scrapbooks testify.

Otto Griese's roomy gym (the largest one in Berlin) was crowded. Among the audience were Ex-Champion Breitenstraeter and Ex-European Champion Hein Mueller who once again happened to stop with his truck in the capital city. Many other long ago retired celebrities of the ring came to greet Sanstoel whom we had seen boxing successfully in Berlin many years ago. Also present was Hellmuth Schulz who had lost his eyesight in a tragic accident outside the ring and still showed great interest in this sport which he once represented in an excellent manner.

#### *Seven Years in America*

Sanstoel has an American record in which his name appears right after world-class boxers. He fought seven years in the United States and Canada. There he received the nickname "Blond Tiger" because of his speed and the doggedness and grimness of his attacks. Among Sanstoel's countless victories are those against Bernasconi, Huat, Archie Bell and the Canadian Bantamweight Champion Leitham. The fight against Pladner ended in a draw and even the few defeats he suffered were honorable. His opponents were only able to defeat him on points....



*Sanstoel Speaks German*

We used the opportunity to talk to Sanstoel after training. He speaks very well German which he has learned here and is using constantly in conversations with his German manager. The Norwegian was not harmed by the many difficult fights he fought. He expresses himself clearly and intelligently. He says the following about Schiller: "Riethdorf delivered a great fight before I defeated him. I know that he was defeated by Schiller. Reason enough for me not to underestimate Schiller, who even as a featherweight will be heavier than I. Tomorrow I demonstrate to my old friends what a boxer can learn in America!"

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Norway produced two great boxers, Otto von Porath, who gave his farewell to the ring this year and Pete Sanstoel, who will be the guest today at Spichernring. While Porath lost fighting strength in the rough American school, Sanstoel still belongs to the world championship class today after a long practice in the USA. He is so highly skilled that in Europe there are hardly any opponents left for him to fight.

On May 10 the Norwegian taught his less-skilled, but courageous, German opponent a "boxing lesson," as they say.

*A Great Achiever*

Sanstol didn't go immediately with full sails into the fight. As an old tactician he figured that 10 rounds would take 30 minutes, and he showed at the beginning of the fight a boxing form of highest perfection without overtaxing himself. That's when the usually exemplary acting judge Pippow let himself get carried away by rebuking Sanstol twice during the fourth and the sixth rounds, reminding him to take advantage of his opportunities. It soon became apparent during the following rounds how superfluous those rebukes turned out to be.

*A Genius in the Ring*

Many years of boxing left no trace on the Norwegian boxer Peter Sanstol. What became of this chap who long ago was seen for the first time in Lunapark? A genius in the ring, a master of boxing who showed all his tricks yesterday evening in the Spichernring. Only someone like Schiller (Hannover), brave and courageous to the end, as well as strong and in the possession of good power reserves could survive the fight.... This is how world-class boxers look like in the ring. Sanstol mastered everything a champion had to know. Until the last round he was quick on his feet, ducking, weaving and avoiding very often Schiller's well-meant punches. The audience applauded both. Sanstol for his skillfulness and Schiller for his courage.

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*Sanstoel Is Asking for the Next One*

Peter Sanstoel, Bantam Champion of Norway, not a tall man but a great master in Fistania, already won convincing victories over two German champions. In Goeteburg our Bantam Champion Riethdorfer realized from the very beginning that he wouldn't be able to stand up to the Norwegian in the long run. Then Sanstoel came to Berlin to fight German featherweight champion Hans Schiller.

And with that—one would think—Sanstoel pretty much cleaned up among our bantam and featherweight boxers. But the Norwegian has a different opinion. After his fight with Schiller he expressed the desire to meet the German Flyweight Champion Richard Stegemann. "You can be certain that I will be able to deliver an even better fight against the flyweight champion than against Schiller, who took too much cover towards the end."

According to a June 15 *The Standard* (Montreal) article, "The Berlin papers were most enthusiastic about Sanstol's showing and stated that including [Max] Schmeling, they have never seen a fighter that can compare with Pete." "He has music in his fighting—he is an artist of the ring!" the papers stated."

Having beaten some of the best Europe had to offer, Sanstol awaited the decision of the IBU. And waited. In late May, negotiations for a bout with Al Brown in Gothenburg were underway and apparently collapsed. Sanstol even sought a fight with Joseph Decico for the European championship. He waited the three months requested of him by the IBU and more before giving up. Since he was having no luck in Europe for a chance at the IBU world or European titles, he decided to go back to Montreal to see if the boxing authorities there would once again give him what he was seeking—another crack at the world title.

### *'No Easy Fights for Me!'*

**D**uring 1934, while Pete Sanstol was "retired" from boxing, Sixto Escobar had fought his way to the top. If there was one thing the Puerto Rican was known for at this time, it was his soporific, dream-inducing right cross. He inflicted devastating and early damage with that right. Few could withstand it. In his first dozen professional fights he often knocked out opponents in the second, fifth or sixth round.

On May 7, 1934, Escobar made his first appearance in a ring north of Puerto Rico, for the grand sum of \$68.00, knocking out Canadian Bantamweight Champion Bobby Leitham—Sanstol's old rival—at Holyoke, Massachusetts.

Escobar then won a ten-round decision over Joey Archibald May 21 in the same town. Leitham wanted another crack at the Puerto Rican, so they fought June 5 in Montreal where the Canadian was once again KO'd—this time in the fifth round. Leitham decided that he had enough, and retired from boxing.

Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, the National Boxing Association had stripped Panama Al Brown of the NBA version of the bantamweight title because of his refusal to fight top contender Baby Casanova of Mexico.

From at least 1931 there had been constant accusations that Brown refused to fight some of the

best North American contenders for his crown on home ground. This was the reason the New York State Athletic Commission had taken back its bantam crown from him. *An Illustrated History of Boxing*, Nat Fleischer & Sam Andre (updated by Nigel Collins)(1997), at p. 376.

According to the 1935 *Everlast Boxing Record*, p. 131: "The altitudinous Panamanian has been on top for so long that he grew lax in defending his title and some of the boxing authorities apparently grew tired of seeing him at the top of the list, for he was legislated out of the title by most of the governing bodies, with the exception of those in Europe." (But then Brown lost even the IBU title to Spain's Baltazar Sangchili June 1, 1935, ending what became known as the longest reign—six years—by a bantamweight until the mid-1990s.)

When Escobar KO'd Baby Casanova in the ninth round June 26, 1934, in Montreal, he was acknowledged *the* world champion by the city's Athletic Commission and awarded the Seagram Belt. For a year afterward Escobar challenged Al Brown for what remaining vestiges of the world title the Panamanian still possessed, but to no avail. Brown would have nothing to do with him either.

Now, at 22 years of age, Sixto Escobar was considered by most as the best bantamweight boxer in the world. It was with Escobar in mind that Pete Sanstol was returning to Montreal.

Sanstol was due to arrive in Montreal the second week of June 1935. When the press learned he was returning they once again heralded his imminent arrival. The *Montreal Daily Herald* sports front page was topped with the headline: PETE SANSTOL ARRIVES. Beneath that was a slightly-smaller one: *An Old Friend Comes To Town—Pete Sanstol*; then *Norway's Blonde Bullet is Back Seeking World Title Match With Sixto Escobar After Fruitless Chase After Championship Match in Europe*. In the article below, Al Parsley declared Sanstol "Montreal's greatest boom in the cauliflower industry."

He was ranked "with Leo Kid Roy as the greatest ring attraction Montreal ever had," proclaimed one Montreal newspaper.

Sanstol's train pulled into Windsor Station June 10 to a huge reception by 200 friends and admirers who greeted him in half a dozen languages. Among the well-wishers as he strode down the platform were fellow boxers Leo (Kid) Roy, Raymond Lirzin, Eugene



Demers, and none other than Bobby Leitham, "with whom Sanstol fought many a stirring battle."

"This is like home," he told the assembled. "I'm back in the city where I had my greatest success as a boxer, and if I can show you all once again how good I am, then I'll be very happy." June 11 *Montreal Daily Herald*.

When this and that second-rater were suggested by reporters as potential opponents Sanstol replied, "No! I'll meet none but the best."

He informed the press that:

he is not ready to accept a match with Carlos "Baby" Quintana. The *Blonde Bullett* [*sic*] shows little enthusiasm for a bout with one of the fighters defeated in the bantamweight eliminations which have progressed jerkily in Montreal rings for the past year. He wants to meet top-notchers in the division, one of the fighters who was successful here. He mentions Sixto Escobar, the Puerto Rican holder of the Seagram belt and recognized by the Montreal Athletic Commission as world champion. He'll take on Lou Salica, one of last Autumn's winners, or Juan Zurita, the Mexican champion who scored a victory over Escobar some weeks ago.

"I'm here to fight myself back to a position I once held in Montreal. I'm here to give you the best and the result will be my thanks to you."

The press reported that Sanstol "demands a world title match with Sixto Escobar, the Puerto Rican bomber who was recognized as world champion here a year ago and whose title holds on a pretty solid structure after a year in which efforts to match him with Panama Al Brown have been unavailing." *Montreal Daily Herald*, June 11.

The day following his arrival in Montreal, Sanstol headed directly to a meeting of the Montreal Boxing Commission and "challenged for the bantam championship of the world, asking for a bout with Sixto Escobar, recognized by the commission as the present holder of the title. The matter was left in abeyance."

A day or two later Sanstol spoke with the press. "After my experiences with the International Boxing Union in Europe, I have come to the firm realization

that only the Montreal Boxing Commission can give me what I want—a chance at the title. They have made promises to me in the best and have always kept them. They're square shooters and I'm all for them. I told [President] Frank Hogan the other day that if he gives me the support I'll supply the fighting and give him everything I have." (Hogan would become the President of the National Boxing Association in 1937.)

'No Easy Fights For Me,' Says Pete

Pete wants no set-ups on his trail to the bantam crown. "I'll turn down anything that looks like an easy fight—I'm out for business." He wants no favors. He wants fights—hard, rip-roaring, knock 'em down and drag 'em out encounters that will make ring history and himself the champion....

He is not the Pete of old but a wise fighter who has grown careful and skilled in the lore of not wasting any energy in the ring—of making every blow count.

From two unidentified Montreal newspaper articles pasted in Sanstol's scrapbooks.

The Montreal Athletic Commission finally gave its answer to the Norseman's challenge: he *would* get another shot at the world title.

Earlier the Canadian Arena Company, long associated with ice hockey, decided to get into the boxing game. One of its first ventures into boxing was to sign Sanstol to a contract, with the promise they would do their best to convince Escobar to fight the Norwegian for the title. They were successful. Escobar agreed to fight the man long-known as *at least* the second-best bantamweight in the world.

*Montreal Daily Herald* Sports Editor Elmer Ferguson wrote on June 20:

In tackling Escobar he gets a chance at one of the best bantams ever to appear in Montreal. It was the hard-hitting Puerto Rican who knocked out Bobby Leitham and Baby Casanova of Mexico here a year ago to hammer out first ranking claims for the title declared vacant by all the foremost organizations in control of boxing in the world when Panama Al Brown sidestepped several bouts with leading fighters of the division.

A June 22 Montreal newspaper confirmed that Sanstol "went right to the top with Escobar, risking the reputation he so hardly won through great fights with Al Brown, victories over Newsboy Brown, Pete DeGrasse, Eugene Huat, Bobby Leitham, and many others." (Actually, Newsboy Brown and Sanstol never fought each other.)

The Escobar-Sanstol bout was officially recognized as a world title fight by the Montreal Athletic Commission and the Canadian Boxing Federation. The National Boxing Association and New York State Athletic Commission came on board, too—according to the July 12 and August 2 *Montreal Gazette*. (The August 27 *New York Times*, p. 24, reporting on the Escobar-Lou Salica bout, confirmed NBA recognition, but casts doubt on any NYSAC sanctioning.)

Sanstol's trainer gave him a news-clipping describing Escobar's recent defeat of Johnny Bang, which the Norwegian pasted in his scrapbook:

Escobar dropped Bang for a count of nine in the first round, put him down for another nine count in the fourth and finished him with a right to the jaw late in the fifth. Escobar used a stinging right hand to riddle Bang's defence. The first time he unleashed it, in the opening round, it landed flush on the chin and the Boston boy sat down for the nine count while the crowd of 2,000 made ready for home.

To this clipping Sanstol's trainer attached a handwritten, friendly reminder:

This article explains Escobar's soporific right cross. You will beat him if you will bear strongly in mind, when getting out of the chair for each round, TO KEEP AWAY FROM HIS SLEEP-PRODUCING RIGHT CROSS. If you allow him to connect with his right on your jaw, I'll catch you as you come tumbling out of the ring.

### *The Battle of the Gloves*

Sixto Escobar arrived in Montreal early July 1935 with both his famous right cross and a brand-new "secret weapon." Immediately trouble arose. First, Sanstol's chronic foot injury began to act up while he was training. "It was first feared he had

suffered a broken bone in his ankle but X-ray examination disproved this diagnosis. His foot is rapidly on the mend and Sanstol expects to resume training soon," recalled one Montreal paper. (This injury eventually caused the match to be postponed to August 7. Sanstol later wrote that this foot problem "took most of my spirit out of me.") Second, Escobar demanded that the rules be changed.

### BRIX WANTS HEAVY GLOVES RULED OUT

Asks Montreal Athletic Commission to Call Special Emergency Meeting to Decide Many Disputed Issues of Bantamweight Championship Match

Lou Brix, manager of Sixto Escobar, got himself a Montreal Athletic Commission rule book last night and sat far, far into the night pouring over the dull printed rules and regulations. He sought to discover by what cause or clause anyone should ask him to make Sixto Escobar wear six-ounce mitts for his world bantamweight championship brawl of twelve rounds with Pete Sanstol, the Norwegian blonde blizzard, next Wednesday night at the Forum.

The truth, like murder, will out. It seems that a Forum official left with the detail of ordering the gloves during the absence of both Tommy Gorman and Armand Vincent, charge d'affaires of boxing for the Canadian Arena Company, asked Raoul Godbout what kind of gloves. Godbout said, "Get six-ounce gloves from Such and Such, Inc."

Now Brix claims six ounce gloves are positively out. Also any kind of gloves manufactured by Such and Such, Inc. He wants five ounce gloves which are of the fine and expert craftsmanship of So and So Company. And to make things doubly sure he lugged up a set of four of these mittens, free and gratis to the cause....

Brix wants ruling on bandages and tape. He wants to know just who is going to referee. He wants to examine the credentials of the judges and he desires weigh-in for Sanstol and his own fighter, Escobar, on Tuesday, not Wednesday noon six to eight hours before the fight. But

most important of all he is ready to put the super-heat on about those gloves for he wants no part of Such and Such, Inc., and their six-ounce gloves.

"Rather than have my Escobar face a smart boxer like Sanstol with those heavy pillows on his hands, I'll take the next train out of town," says Lou....

This title bout between Escobar and Sanstol begins to assume real championship proportions.

By Al Parsley of the *Montreal Daily Herald*.

Then another snag developed. In their efforts to create pre-fight excitement the promoters had arranged for Sanstol and Escobar to train at the Forum in front of the public for free. Sanstol was all for it, but Brix and Escobar wanted nothing to do with it.

"Nothing doing," they chorused. "We'll have no part of such a notion. We want to conduct our training privately at some little gym where we'll be away from the autograph hunters and other public nuisances—and anyway we want none of Sanstol's managers, masseurs, sparring-partners around when we work out. None of his retinue must be within distance."

But [promoter] Gorman patiently but firmly pointed out that the Forum had advertised an open house to the public that both boxers were expected to train there, that he had gone to considerable trouble and expense to construct a ring and install punching bags and other training paraphernalia. And last but not least that he expected both Escobar and Sanstol to go to work there so the public could see them, get a line of their qualities, get interested and come and see the fight. Then they'd have a big crowd. The fighters would draw down fat percentages and every one would be happy. And the plans must be carried out as originally agreed, he concluded with an act of finality.

By Mr. Parsley in another *Montreal Daily Herald* article.

Brix and Escobar relented on the condition that no one associated with Sanstol in any way could be on the premises while Escobar trained. But they wouldn't have a problem if any of their entourage observed Sanstol training. Immediately thereafter they had a change of

heart when the press disclosed Escobar's new "secret weapon."

Sixto showed he still possesses dynamite in his right hand when he staggered [sparring partner] Gerson with a terrific right cross half way through the second round. Sixto also demonstrates that he has acquired a telling uppercut with his right hand, a blow never showed in any of his previous appearances here. Had he had one the night he fought [Eugene] Huat, he might have put the Frenchman on the floor.

Escobar will not stage any more workouts at the Forum due to inadequacy of the equipment, Manager Lou Brix stated after the workout.

The above is from an unidentified Montreal newspaper.

#### Escobar Says He Will K.O. Sanstol In the Seventh Round But Pete Begs To Differ

Brotherly love will evidently be absent in large quantities at the Forum on the night of August 7th....

Despite the strong statements made by the opponents for the big fight here, however, one can judge from the statements made by the fighters that they both have a healthy respect for each other's abilities....

"Sanstol will be lifted from the canvas not later than the seventh round," says Sixto, "and I will still be bantamweight champion of the world. Only something unusual should keep me from winning within that space of time for I don't believe that Sanstol's legs can stand the pace.

"I am not kidding myself—I know that I will have to employ all my resources to weather the storm of Sanstol's first attack but I figure that a couple of good rights placed in the proper spots should take the steam out of him early in the scrap. The final wallop should then be little more than a matter of routine for I cannot see how Pete can keep away from my right for 12 rounds.

"If by any chance he goes the route, I cannot imagine having any trouble in 'out-hearting' him and winning by a decisive margin.

"They tell me Mr. Sanstol has never been knocked out. It will be my privilege to be the first to put him to sleep—and not later than the seventh."

#### Pete Sanstol Has His Own Ideas

After Pete Sanstol had finished a grueling session in his local training quarters this morning, he presented *The Standard* with a few ideas of his own.

"This fable about my bad legs is pure rot—as Mr. Escobar will find out for himself," he declared. "I had a little trouble with one but it is perfectly O.K. now and as strong as ever.

"As for Mr. Escobar, he does not promote any goose-pimples on me by any chatter that comes from his direction. I came all the way from Norway to get that shot at him and my ambition to become bantamweight champion is just as strong as my determination to trim Escobar personally.

"Right now I am in better condition than I ever have been in my life. My wind, my legs, my power 'to take it' and my ability 'to give it' are at their highest peak and I intend to back up everything I say with the real McCoy on the night of August 7th.

"If I am knocked down the way Leitham and Casanova were, I know that I have the condition to get right back up again, and if the fight goes the limit I feel that I'll have plenty of reserve strength to carry me through to my goal."

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#### Dead-Lock Looms For Title Bout Pete Sanstol Ready to Hand Ultimatum to Montreal Athletic Commission 'Six Ounce Gloves or No Fight'

There may be a dead-lock, paralleling former title-fight history here, when the Athletic Commission meets tomorrow to settle final details for the conduct of the Sixto Escobar-Pete Sanstol world championship bantamweight bout of twelve rounds tomorrow night at the Forum.

When Sanstol battled Al Brown for the world title here in 1931, there was a deadlock in the Commission itself over the style of judging. Not until 7:30 in the evening did it become definite that there would be a fight, the Commission finally agreeing to change the existing rules on judging, at Brown's request.

Now the tangle comes from without, not within, the Commission. President Hogan intimated yesterday that five-ounce gloves would be ordered, this to break the tangle over the gloves that has been raging for a week.

But this doesn't suit Sanstol. "Six ounce gloves or no fight," was his indirect ultimatum to the Commission, delivered today. "I've been fighting around here a long time, drawn big gates, put up good fights," said Sanstol. "I always used six-ounce gloves. Why should there be any change now, any departure from the rules?"

Lou Brix, pilot of Escobar, scenting a knockout, naturally wants the gloves as light as possible. He suggested four-ounce fist-coverings....

Lou Brix will attend the Athletic Commission meeting tomorrow noon to fight for his rights and those of Escobar....

While Brix will do the talking on Escobar's behalf Sanstol will likely be his own counsel. Though Raoul Godbout looks after most of Sanstol's ring affairs in Montreal, when it comes to important matters of business Pete, who can argue in five or six languages, can always be his own spokesman and he covers himself with considerable distinction in committee room or on the speaker's platform.

Above two articles from *The Standard*.

#### Battle of Gloves Waged Furiously

An impasse was reached yesterday when Manager Raoul Godbout and Sanstol declared positively that the Norwegian would not enter the ring to fight with five-ounce gloves on top of a declaration by Chairman Hogan of the Montreal Athletic Commission that five-ouncers are to be used. Chairman Hogan also flatly informed Manager Lou Brix of Escobar that the

officials for the bout will not be named until the principals enter the ring. Brix wanted the names released for his approval.

The battle over the gloves started when the Forum, which is running the show, bought a set of six-ounce gloves in New York City. Brix brought along a set of his own, claiming them to be five-ouncers although Godbout swears he knows they weigh only four. Brix is saying Sanstol is afraid of Escobar's punch and the Norwegian retorts that it isn't the extra ounce he objects to, it's merely the principle of the thing. The argument yesterday developed into something more serious than mere ballyhoo when Sanstol became so incensed that he canceled an engagement to speak over the air. When he heard about Brix's alleged four-ounce gloves he was barely able to speak.

*The Gazette*

Elmer Ferguson, *Montreal Daily Herald*:

#### The Great Dispute of the Ounces

Naturally, the lighter the weight of a boxing glove in any contest, the more chances exist that there will be a knockout. The light glove is thinner....

Escobar being a knockout puncher, the Messrs. Brix and Escobar desire that the smallest possible gloves shall be worn, so that the chances of knocking out Sanstol will be increased. The Messrs. Godbout and Sanstol, aware that Sanstol wins his fights on speed and points, and aware, too, of the very obvious fact that a knockout will abruptly ruin his chances for victory, wish the gloves to be as large and non-lethal as possible.

The rules prescribe that the gloves shall be not less than five ounces in weight. So, when the verbiage has cleared away, the gloves worn tomorrow night will be not less than five ounces in weight, likely no more...

There is always trickery, chicanery and general skullduggery in the industry and if the boys view each other with distrust, they have good reason for doing so....

There was a bit of trickery over the gloves, in fact, when Sanstol himself last fought for a world's championship in Montreal, though of the sort calculated to lessen, rather than increase, the lethal qualities of the socking in that stirring battle.

Your correspondent isn't attempting to put the finger on any one person in the matter, nor to place the blame, but the facts are, that in the Sanstol fight with the elongated Negro title-holder, Al Brown, the gloves while of the regulation weight were so constructed inside the leather covering that a knockout could be registered only if the glove was propelled by a welterweight. No bantamweight could hit hard enough to score a decisive punch, because the gloves were made in alternate layers of felt and sponge, which absorbed the shock of a hard punch and decreased to a minimum the chances for a knockout. "Hatless Dave" Lumiansky, then the manager of Brown, who prides himself on being trick-proof in ring matters, will not be pleased to hear this.

Mr. Gus Wilson, who has long been associated with the trickeries and wiles of the cauliflower industry, knows most of the answers in that peculiar trade. He piloted Eugene Huat when the latter fought his many battles here.... [H]e was master of the art of doing the bandages into knots over the knuckles of his fighters, with the result that after a few blows had landed, these knots became the consistency of brass knuckles, cutting and bruising the recipient. Mr. Wilson was always careful to place the bandages in a grip and lock them up after a match. Few except himself and his fighters ever saw them.

It is the manager's business to guard against this sort of thing. That's what they are hired for. Hence the outcries and suspicions in the present case.

Meanwhile, another bout was being arranged back in Oslo for Sanstol, as one Montreal article explained:

Mr. Sanstol is leaving for his native Norway a few days after the Escobar match, win or lose. He is going back to the land of the Vikings not merely to fight, but to settle a matter of

journalistic honor. The sports writers in France take their journalism very seriously, as evidenced by a recent dueling challenge flung out by a Parisian *radacteur de sport*.

Few know that Mr. Sanstol, in addition to throwing an intriguing line of leather and making a fair job of playing a violin, also swings a mean type-writer. He has for years been correspondent for a sporting journal in Oslo, to the great chagrin of a rival newspaper there, for Sanstol's name brought a great following to his paper. The rival newspaper has never failed to seek to belittle Sanstol on any sort of pretext. Now the enterprising paper has uncovered a bantam fighter who is termed "The New Pete Sanstol," and has challenged the Old Pete to come back and fight him. The Old Pete accepted with alacrity, and a fierce newspaper duel will precede the match.

Elmer Ferguson described how Sanstol's fighting style had evolved over the years:

The Sanstol you'll see tonight, seeking to evade the stunning blows of the poker-faced Escobar, will hardly be in ring technique the same Sanstol you saw in other days. Sanstol first flashed on the Montreal fistic horizon half a dozen years ago. This writer recollects him knocking out Aleck Burlie in April of 1928, over seven years ago at the Forum. In those days Sanstol was a bewildering bundle of speed and energy. His slim, tireless legs carried him around the ring at bounding, blinding speed. He threw his endless energy to the winds with complete abandon. He was a profligate spendthrift of energy and strength, of nerve force. He had all the carelessness of youth about vitality as expended in the ring. He had a seemingly endless supply. For ten or twelve rounds he could dance, bounce, leap and dash about the ring on those steel legs, and meanwhile his speeding fists could keep on throwing stinging punches at bewildering speed, punches from all angles. For not only did Sanstol bound about the ring. He ducked like lightning, weaved, bobbed, always going at top speed, a master-boxer in his own fashion, a fashion founded on speed and stamina.

Today, or tonight, you'll probably find him a changed Sanstol. The fighting heart that blazes from his ice-cold eyes still sends him on. But fistic age has tempered the pace, has developed a new ring cunning, and a tendency to accomplish by polished skill what he once achieved by youthful energy that disdained to save itself, that was gladly thrown to the winds.

Sanstol doesn't bound so much as he did. He moves now in a more shuffling fashion, as did great fighters before him, and as did such peerless runners as Schrubbs and Nurmi, the greatest of all conservation stylists. Today Sanstol is inclined to save his legs, to some degree, and to employ instead the ring-craft he has acquired in nearly ten years of campaigning up and down the fistic lanes of two continents. Today he is more the Dempsey in his style, less the old Sanstol. His hands still carry their speed, his arms and shoulders the energy to hurl an endless barrage of punches. But he will be found doing much more of the weaving and bending to evade blows or get himself into hitting position. He will not be leaping five or six feet when an evasive swing of a few inches will suffice. He will be doing more of the bobbing and ducking and swinging from the hips, with which he used to delight crowds and bewilder his opponents.

And he will be doing less of bounding and leaping.

Escobar never was spectacular. He is ice-cold, calculating, waiting to strike python-like with his right hand that is always poised in deadly fashion. Escobar never leaped or bound. He shuffled in grimly, steadily, conserving energy, his left hand jabbing and hooking, right hand poised. He may find Sanstol a difficult target, for he will seldom catch the blonde upright. He will be shooting punches at a swift-moving target. When Escobar can land, his punch is lethal. Landing it is something else again.

*The August 7 Montreal Daily Herald:*

The fistic picture has changed vastly in the four-year period, as the fistic picture inevitably does. [Panama Al] Brown himself is now a discarded and discredited figure. A great



champion in his day, largely because of his freakish physical construction, height and enormous reach, he was recently beat by a Spanish fighter. His title has been declared forfeited all over the world because of his refusal to fight. Huat has slipped to mediocrity, Newsboy Brown has since retired, but Sanstol, one of the most durable battlers the division has known in any era, still carries on, and is today, after ten years of campaigning, ranked high among the world's bantams.

### Battle of the Gloves Is Ended

Five ounce gloves will be worn when Sixto Escobar defends his world's bantamweight championship against Pete Sanstol of Norway in the Forum tonight.

The acrimonious arguments over the weight of the gloves was settled, though not without accusations being made and scales being used, when managers of the rival boxers and Armand Vincent, representing the Forum interests, came before the Athletic Commission today...

Arrangements were made for another set of five-ounce gloves, which will be delivered to Pres. Hogan of the Athletic Commission and retained by him until delivered into the ring...

After Sanstol weighed in, he walked over and shook hands with Escobar. The Puerto Rican grinned amiably and presented Sanstol with half of an orange he was eating. Sanstol accepted and ate it.

*Montreal Daily Herald*

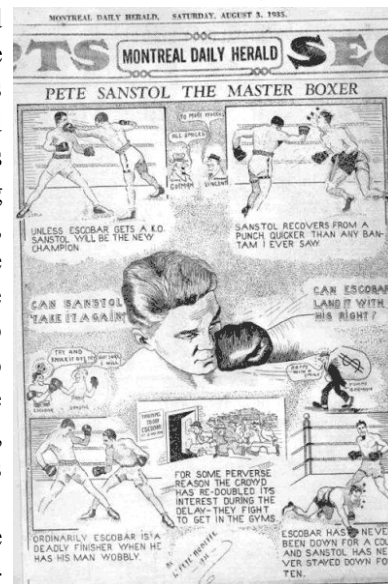
### *The Epic Fight with Sixto Escobar*

**O**n the evening of August 7, 1935, Pete Sanstol entered the Montreal Forum to a terrific ovation from over 10,000 spectators and headed down the aisle to fight Sixto Escobar—Bantamweight Champion of the World.

It is safe to assume that as he passed through the massive crowd, fellow boxers Leo (Kid) Roy, Raymond Lirzin, Eugene Demers, and his old rival—Bobby Leitham—cheered him on.

The crowd likely also included French bantam champion Joseph Decico and his manager Lew Burston—the man who had discovered Sanstol fighting in a Paris ring back in 1926, and who had brought the Norwegian to America in 1927. Burston had arrived in Montreal a few days earlier with Decico and appeared before the Montreal Athletic Commission to challenge for "a crack at Wednesday night's winner." *The Gazette*, August 2. Burston also brought, it appears, another new client—future lightweight-great Pedro Montanez of Puerto Rico. (Or Montanez had come with Escobar. In a February 22, 2007 BoxRec.com forum post, and a later private message to the writer, Montanez's grandson said: his grandfather had been at this fight and said it was "unbelievable"; Montanez always made sure to watch Escobar in action and often sought advice from his fellow Puerto Rican, but, Pedro told his grandson, he ended up learning more from Sanstol than from Escobar; and that Sanstol never received the proper credit he deserved, declaring—that among the best bantamweights he had ever seen fight—only Al Brown, Escobar, Eder Jofre, and Carlos Zarate had been better than Pete Sanstol.)

Thirty-year-old Pete Sanstol, at the twilight of his career, climbed through the ropes and into the ring wearing, no doubt, his familiar blue bathrobe, while twenty-two year-old Sixto Escobar, at the prime of his career, flexed his "five-ounce" gloves. (Or were they the four-ouncers suspected by Godbout? According to the next day's *Montreal Daily Herald*: "Godbout was sporting in the fashion he yielded his claims just before the fighters went into the ring Wednesday night. He had refused to fight with the gloves brought up by Lou Brix, but this was the set that finally was used, with Godbout yielding his technical rights in the case so that the fight could go on and the big crowd would not be disappointed.")



Escobar Retains Claim To Crown Beating  
Sanstol  
Keeps Bantam Title  
But Norwegian Wins All the Glory  
in His Game Battle

Sixto Escobar of Puerto Rico retained his world bantam championship as recognized by the Montreal Athletic Commission through 12 rounds of bitter fighting at the Forum last night but it was Pete Sanstol of Norway, the man he vanquished, who won the hearts of 10,000 of the faithful who saw the bout.

Seldom is one privileged to see a display of courage such as the blond Norwegian gave last night to go the route against the brown destroyer from the Carribean. Raked by Escobar's cruel left hooks and rapier-like rights throughout the fight, his left eye closed for the last four rounds and at times virtually out on his feet, Sanstol fought a wide-open slashing battle with Escobar for the last half of the bout that had the big crowd at the Forum on its feet cheering him to the echo....

Boxing coolly, Escobar measured his man carefully and in the seventh he staggered Sanstol twice with a left hook and then a right. Another right started the blood trickling from Pete's left eye and when Sixto missed two haymakers just at the bell the end seemed near.

But the fans and Sixto reckoned not with the game heart of Sanstol and what followed for the remainder of the fight was like seeing the spirit of the Vikings sweep across the tense, excitement-filled air of the Forum. For Pete tossed all caution aside and decided to slug it out with the deadly little brown man from the Indies who has leveled such opponents as Baby Casanova and Bobby Leitham with his deadly blows.... The crowd roared itself hoarse for Sanstol.

[The last four rounds were] a mad exhibition of courage on the part of Sanstol, but as courageous a stand as was ever put on at the Forum. Pete's face was a horrible, bloody mask, his features distorted by the swelling from Escobar's blows, but he was still willing to trade punches for another 12 rounds with the terror from the south. Escobar's hand was raised in

victory, the result of the unanimous decision of the three judges, but it was Sanstol who took all the glory out of the fight. He was a gallant figure even in defeat.

*The Gazette*

ESCOBAR EASILY OUTPOINTS SANSTOL  
PUERTO RICAN STILL HAS BANTAM  
CROWN

Pete Sanstol, Loser,  
Receives Thunderous Applause  
For Courageous Showing Made in Defeat

Twice the bell saved Pete Sanstol from being knocked out in his vain but courageous effort to wrest the world's bantam boxing crown from the brow of Sixto Escobar at the Forum last night. And it was Sanstol's courage, determination and dodging skill that enabled ten or eleven thousand excited men and women to witness the best prize fight seen here for many a night.

That Escobar won by a large margin and through skillful, powerful and well-placed blows is true; but it was not an easy victory and he had to work hard for it.

The tough pugilistic nut that opposed him was very hard to crack, though in the end Sanstol's face was cut to ribbons, he tottered on his feet and had to be handed over to the care of a physician for about an hour after the last and twelfth round was finished....

There was hardly any of the hugging and clinching which spoils so many bouts, except toward the end when Sanstol was compelled to clinch to keep on his feet. Most of the time the men fought toe to toe....

Notwithstanding all that his seconds tried, and Raoul Godbout himself was in command, Sanstol's face looked like raw and mascerated [*sic*] beef steak a few seconds after the seventh round began.... But he fought with desperation, aided by that uncanny sixth sense born fighters possess, hoping that some of his wide, heavy swings might reach the proper spot and topple Escobar from his throne.

The crowd was frantic with excitement, expecting him to be knocked out any moment, although the sympathy of the majority seemed to

be with him. Amidst the roar from the thousands of throats Sanstol kept on his wild and one might say almost senseless attack, till he was compelled to fall in a clinch to save himself before the final gong sounded. Sanstol's face was cruelly cut up, but he got the best of the cheering when he was escorted from the ring.

*Montreal Daily Star*

ESCOBAR KEEPS WORLD TITLE  
Sanstol Makes Gallant Stand In Defeat  
But Champion Too Powerful

He came plunging in, plunging in, plunging in, this blonde fighter with the heart of a lion and the red blood of his ancient Viking forbears pounding through his veins.

He kept plunging in, with one eye completely closed, his face no longer a face, but a battered, swollen, bruised and distorted pulp. He could hardly see the dancing brown figure in front of him. He had to turn his head to the far left to glimpse his foeman. He couldn't see, he could only sense the lethal right hand that round after round beat a cruel tattoo upon his left face and head. But through the mists of blood, half-blinded, he came plunging in, right to the last minute of the twelfth round.

So Pete Sanstol, as big-hearted a fighter as ever stepped on resined canvas, was turned back in another bid for a world fistic title at the Forum last night, as a near-capacity crowd of some 11,000 people acclaimed his dauntless courage.

[Escobar] smashed and battered Sanstol until the blonde game-cock's face was pulp. But he couldn't floor him, he couldn't stop his charging course, he couldn't break the fighting heart of this tough Nordic from the land of the fjords and ice-floes. Sanstol lost, but into history of Montreal ringdom he wrote such an epic of raw courage, of dauntless heart, of amazing stamina as may never be duplicated. He reeled at times; he could see but dimly through a mist of blood. But he kept plunging in, his fists swinging, to the very end.

*Montreal Daily Herald*

After the fight a physician spent about an hour tending to Sanstol's wounds. Then the reporters were allowed into his dressing room. This is Elmer Ferguson's account of what he witnessed:

A Tale of the Two Dressing-Rooms

The sentimentalists plumped for Sanstol. Escobar really won the fight, but Sanstol's stand was so gallant that sentiment swung his way with those who don't reduce the thing to mathematics.

The two dressing-rooms, after the fight, told the story. On the east end of the Forum, Escobar sat on the edge of the table, unmarked, his legs swinging, a broad grin on his face. "He tough," was his laconic tribute to his beaten Norse foeman. Sixto didn't have any souvenirs of the fight. He came out without a scratch, without even a swollen hand despite the crashing attack he rained on Sanstol's face and head.

Across the big Forum, on the west-side, it was different. A swollen, flattened nose, puffed and swollen lips—these were all visible of a figure that lay prone on the table, covered with blankets and towels. Cubes of ice were being passed across the fevered lips to fight off further swelling. That was Sanstol, after his gallant stand.

"I couldn't see him—I only knew he was in front of me."

Through bloodied lips, puffed to balloon-tire proportions, the big-hearted Norseman spoke as he lay stretched flat in the smoke-filled atmosphere. "Halfway through the fight my left eye closed completely," he continued as the crowded dressing room grew silent. "My right eye was gone in the ninth. After that—well, I just fought. Do you think the crowd liked the fight? I hope so, for after I fight in Norway I am coming back to fight Escobar again, I hope."

Strange people, these fighters. Sanstol laid there, a battered hulk of a fighting-man. The blonde blizzard from Norway had hooked up with a brooding, twisting typhoon from the Carribean. He had been beaten—taken the worst whipping of his life—but he had displayed the red badge of courage, refused to whimper for quarter when half-blinded before the fight was

half over. He might have added that he was nursing a twisted ankle throughout the fight. He might have but he didn't. In no way did the Blonde Bullet, who once tore through the ranks of the bantams like a projectile from a Lewis gun, try to detract from the victory of the champion. But he was still an analyst. "He can hit all right," he said. "But he can't punch the way Bernasconi did. There was a puncher." And Sanstol was laying there, almost blind.

Louis the trainer lifted the ice-filled towel that concealed the Norwegian's swollen and bleeding eyes to daub away the blood. No one said anything. Expertly, the trainer flicked a clotted mass from the corner of the warrior's right eye, then replaced the towel.

"Bernasconi was the hardest puncher I ever fought," Sanstol said. "There was dynamite in both of his fists!"

Bernasconi once knocked Pete down, but Sanstol won the decision, and came out without a mark. [Actually, there was no mention of such a knockdown in reports of that Bernasconi bout.] Strange that he should think of a four-year-old fight at this time, laying there blinded, pulpy, the result of a battering from the hands of a great champion. But fighters are strange people.

The August 9 *Montreal Daily Herald*:

A great pair of pals, Godbout and Sanstol. After the Wednesday night fight, Godbout sat up all night rubbing ice on his boxer's face, long after Sanstol had fallen into a sound sleep, exhausted by his great display in the ring. While Sanstol slept peacefully, Godbout worked on so, that yesterday noon, the swelling had decreased appreciably. Immediately after he awoke, Sanstol visited an eye specialist who said no harm at all had come to his left optic. The swelling was all superficial and the cuts small.

"He's the bravest guy I ever fought." Sixto Escobar.  
*The Gazette*, August 8.



### *The Ultimate Triumph*

It appears that Pete Sanstol got the word by the time he and manager Raoul Godbout reached Oslo, Norway in mid-August 1935—not long after his epic fight with Sixto Escobar in Montreal—that he was not going to be fighting any "New Pete Sanstol" after all. Instead, it was going to be his long-time nemesis—Panama Al Brown!

Amidst whatever ballyhoo there may have been surrounding the "Old Pete Sanstol" coming to fight the "New Pete Sanstol," longtime professional ice-skating promoter Oscar Hansen had been taking steps to get Panama Al Brown to come to Oslo. Now that a title was no longer at stake, Brown accepted Hansen's offer to fight the most famous boxer in Scandinavia. (This was his first fight since losing what remained of his bantamweight world title to Baltazar Sangchili June 1.)

Sanstol arrived in Oslo wearing a black patch over his red and swollen left eye. He rented an apartment in Wergelandsveien 5—200 meters east of the King's Castle, and began training in earnest. He once again personally picked a tall amateur named John Wiksen from Sandefjord, Norway, to be his main sparring partner. Wiksen had been his partner for the Joey Carr, Werner Riethdorf, and Hans Schiller fights. Wiksen later wrote an article of his experiences during this time, entitled "Sanstol Mot Brown I Oslo." (In June of 2006, the Lund Historical Society of Moi, Norway—Sanstol's birthplace—published his autobiography, entitled *Gjennon Ringen*, and appended John Wiksen's article as the final chapter. Some of what follows comes from Wiksen's personal recollections.)

Wiksen wrote that his experiences with Sanstol had made him a better boxer, and gave him self-respect after many hard years of manual work during the economical depression in Oslo. He had worked as an errand boy, carrying everything from letters to 50-kilo sacks of coffee. He had been a stevedore and a sailor. He had cooked whales for a living. As a boxer he knew

he was a superb technician, he wrote, but he lacked self-confidence; he had lost more fights than he had won.

During this time many Oslo boxers had a friend in Gunnar Hansen, a sports administrator. Hansen would buy lunch for the fighters on days when there were no jobs. It was through Hansen that Wiksen got a job as a paid sparring partner. He was ideal as Sanstol's sparring partner: he was tall and lanky and thus perfect in the role as Panama Al Brown. He was a fast moving 65-kilo fighter who could weather the storms of a speedy bantam. As time went on, Sanstol got Wiksen to believe in himself and built his self-confidence. Wiksen later went on a winning streak, as a direct result of Sanstol's influence.

The Brown fight was set for August 30 at Bislet Stadium—a football arena 500 meters northeast of the King's Castle, known today for the annual Bislet Games in athletics—since the venue had already been booked for Sanstol's fight with the "New Pete Sanstol."

Brown's manager for this fight was Leon Bellieres of France. Brown was finally free of the chains of Dave Lumiansky, his long-time former manager—who had apparently held himself out as still representing the boxer well into 1934, despite the expiration of their contract in October 1933. If every dramatic story has a villain—a character at cross purposes with the hero—then the villain here would be Lumiansky, not Panama Al Brown. For Brown was as much a victim as Sanstol had been. It was Lumiansky who had spread false reports about Brown's early title claims; who had kept Brown fighting so frequently that the Panamanian was sometimes forced to resort to drugs late in his career to kill the pain he endured. And it was Lumiansky who was always thwarting Sanstol's every attempt for a shot at Brown's title, and who frequently had Brown avoid fighting other top contenders, so as to keep the lucrative world title for as long as he could, in order, it seems, to rake in more and more money.

Al Brown arrived in Oslo mid-August with Bellieres. The former world champion's appearance in Norway created a media frenzy. He made many public appearances. There were promotional photos of Brown seated behind a set of drums, with a group of amateur Norwegian boxers, and as the guest of honor, with Sanstol, at a private dinner given August 27 by promoter Hansen.

Two weeks before the fight, Brown made a short trip to Brussels for some unknown reason.

The papers soon started to trumpet the event as the "Black and White" fight. Brown was to wear white gloves, and Sanstol black ones—highly unusual in those days. And they were to be five-ouncers.



Brown began training with five Norwegian featherweights. These boxers also sparred with Sanstol, but Wiksen was assigned exclusively to his fellow Norseman, eventually going hundreds of rounds with the former World Champion.

Both Sanstol and Brown trained in the same facility, at least for most of their training, with the public admitted to watch at 50 øre each. The Norwegian trained at 12:30 p.m., usually outdoors, as was his preference, while the Panamanian trained at 5:00 in the afternoon, usually outdoors as well.

According to Wiksen, Sanstol's training schedule was:

6.00 Running and gymnastics in the park around The King's Castle in Oslo.

8.00 Breakfast with pressed juice from an orange, a piece of dried bread with some butter.

12.00: Running and gymnastics in the same park.

14.00 Dinner: Scrambled eggs and orange juice.

16.00 Punching ball, hard gymnastics and three rounds in the ring, full tempo.

According to his journal entries, this was a happy time for Sanstol. He was enjoying training for this historic bout with Al Brown.

Brown also seemed very happy at this time. Then he injured his ankle while training, so the fight was moved back a week to Sept. 6. Soon after doctors at the Public Medical Center found a small swelling on his finger, so the bout was postponed yet another week, to Friday the 13th—sending shivers throughout the public. On Sept. 8, while apparently taking a short hiatus from training, Brown was in Sweden to referee a bout between Per Bjork and Anders Peterson.

On the eve of the fight, *Sports Manden* magazine published an article listing the predictions of about 100 Scandinavian boxing pundits. Quite a few thought Brown would KO Sanstol in the eighth round. Some figured the Norwegian would get a TKO in the fourth. The rest were split on which fighter would win on points, with slightly more than half predicting that Brown would prevail.

The day *finally* arrived, and "13" was indeed beginning to look like an unlucky number. It had been raining heavily and Promoter Oscar Hansen was nervous. He had been expecting a record crowd of 20,000 people. Now he didn't how many would actually show. When the rain finally stopped, just before the show was to begin, about eight or nine thousand people were there—but that was enough to save the day financially for Hansen.

It is also believed that Harald Undersrud was present, for there was an Oslo newspaper article quoting him before the bout. Undersrud was the man who had glimpsed the potential greatness amateur boxer Pete Sanstol possessed way back in the mid-1920s, and who had convinced the boy from Moi to become a professional fighter. In fact, Undersrud had become Sanstol's first professional manager and a father figure.

The preliminary matches included the semi-final of Harald Hansen defeating German Flyweight Champion Richard Stegemann on points, and Edgar Norman winning a decision over Adolf Heuser.

John Wiksen was in the corners of both Stegemann and Heuser because of his fluent German. Heuser was quite obsessive about a certain green sponge that Wiksen absolutely had to use during the fight. Heuser more or less warned Wiksen: "And if you lose that sponge, I'll kill you." It seems that Heuser had first used that sponge when he went the 15-round distance with Maxie Rosenbloom two years earlier at Madison Square Garden for the New York State Athletic Commission's Light Heavyweight Title, and the item had been an obsession ever since. When it disappeared somehow during his fight with Norman, a furious Heuser chased Wiksen through the crowd after losing the bout. Wiksen managed to escape and hid himself under some chairs. About five minutes later he crawled up to watch the Brown-Sanstol fight. (The next day Wiksen saw Heuser coming down the street and darted into a side alley to avoid being seen. But the mystical green sponge was gone forever.)

According to Sanstol in a 1939 writing, the great Norwegian ice-skater Sonja Henie "was introduced from the ring, where the fighters Al Brown and Pete Sanstol were about to slug it out for country, honour and, of course, the money."

Otto Griese was standing in the ring, prepared to referee the bout, when Pete Sanstol climbed through the ropes wearing black gloves and loose, dark trunks. Brown wore white gloves, tight-fitting trunks, and his trademark knee brace. Sanstol appeared nervous from the very beginning, according to a newspaper clipping he pasted in one his scrapbooks. It is understandable why. He was fighting before a home crowd, finally facing Brown once again, and he had just received the most royal clobbering of his life the month before from Sixto Escobar. And maybe, just maybe, he had decided this would be the final bout of his career; he wanted to end his career on a high note.

In the first round Brown hit his foe with a long, fast, and hard left that connected flush. He began to clinch and hold Sanstol in the third round, which caused the crowd to protest and Brown to smile. In the third, Brown opened that old cut by Sanstol's left eye, which began to bleed. Brown constantly aimed for that eye. Sanstol unintentionally hit low a couple of times. In the fourth Brown rabbit-punched and hit a low blow himself. He was "seriously warned" for more holding.

He got another warning for holding in the fifth, and still another in the sixth, causing the crowd to complain loudly. Meanwhile he was still attacking that chronic cut on the Norwegian's left eye with hooks for the balance of the fight. The eye was bleeding profusely in the eighth. The ninth round saw Brown seeking a knockout and Sanstol going at a spectacular tempo. The roar of the delirious fans was deafening. When the bell sounded the start of the tenth and final stanza Brown could be heard asking Sanstol what round was it, with Sanstol replying that he thought they were in the eighth. While Sanstol continued his aggressive pace, Brown tried for a knockout early in the round but, exhausted and unable to accomplish anything effective, rode out the remainder of the fight.



Otto Griese checked the score-card and raised Sanstol's hand. He had won five rounds, Brown two, with the remaining three rounds even. Sanstol had not wasted the least little drop of energy or a single blow.

Sanstol had surgery on his left eye a few days after the fight, with the doctors barely saving his vision. He was treated at the Rikshospitalet, just 500 meters east of Bislet—where the fight had taken place. (The buildings still exist today, but they are now a medical museum.)

When he was interviewed by the Norwegian "men's" magazine *Vi Menn* in 1975, Sanstol claimed this victory was the result of good luck and some hard work. He told reporter Erik Sletholt that everyone in Oslo wanted to show Brown a good time. He was taken out on the town, and given a great time, while people clamored to have their photographs taken with him. Brown had such a delightful time in Oslo that he did little training, while Sanstol trained like never before.

Sletholt mentioned that Brown had been favored to win this fight, but that Sanstol said before the fight that he was going to win. "Sure, you say such things to build up self confidence. But I was far from sure. My only chance was to attack ceaselessly, and I stuck to that tactic. If I had let him come to me, even luck wouldn't have helped me."

Sanstol was also asked, if this had been a title fight, would he have won. "Honestly, I don't think so," the 70-year-old former World Champion answered. "Al Brown was a fabulous boxer. Tall and lanky but with a brilliant technique and surely the greatest bantam that ever lived. The fight in Oslo was not our first, you know. I fought him in Montreal some years before, and then I lost. Not much separated us—he won on a narrow points margin. Two judges had him as winner, the third had me. But I *know* that the best man won that day."

There had been speculation in the press of a "fixed" fight, as it appeared to some that Brown had not given his best efforts, and maybe also because of Sanstol's claims that he was going to win. Knowing that the Elongated Panamanian was still hanging out in Oslo, Wiksen and some journalists went hunting for Brown to confront him with their suspicions. They found him drinking and celebrating with prostitutes in a fashionable club called *Den Røde Mølle* ("The Red Mill," which existed well into the 1980s as a popular jazz club). When he was challenged to admit the truth as to whether the fight had been fixed Brown actually

began to weep, Wiksen recalled. Panama Al Brown then confessed two things, before reducing them to writing, which he then handed to the reporters. One, he had never—*ever*—accepted a bribe or engaged in a fixed fight in his life. Two, Pete Sanstol *truly* had been the better man.



Sanstol's final ring exit: 13 Sept. 1935

### *Pebbles and Ripples*

Pete Sanstol decided to retire from boxing after this bout—his ultimate triumph. Then Al Brown did something very odd: he reversed the tables and *himself* challenged Sanstol to a third contest, betting 50,000 francs he would win if the Norseman agreed to fight the following month in Paris. On October 15 Sanstol wrote in his journal that everything was ready for that rubber match with Brown, but that fight never occurred. (In November 1936 he wrote in his journal that this third match with Brown was underway—but that, too, never happened.) So, Pete Sanstol hung up the gloves for good. He ended his professional boxing career where it had started nine years earlier—in Oslo, Norway. He had "given his all" to become one of the few *undisputed* Champions of the World—to be remembered on the list of Champions and not become just another forgotten contender, as he once wrote in his journal. This time, the Blond Tiger retired permanently. (He engaged in two charity bouts while serving in the United States Army in 1942, which were added by historians to his record.) He died in 1982 after a series of strokes, aged 76.

Panama Al Brown decided to retire, too. Two years later he made a comeback, and, coincidentally, also had his last fights in 1942. He died in 1951 of tuberculosis, aged 48.

Over the years since the 1930s Panama Al Brown and Pete Sanstol each had become remembered in vastly different ways by boxing fans and historians.

Nat Fleischer, original publisher and editor of *The Ring*, considered Brown one of the top 10 greatest bantamweights of all-time. *The Ring*, August 1985, p. 26. The March 1975 issue proclaimed him the second greatest bantamweight boxer of all time. The May 1994 issue rated him the fifth-best bantam ever. In 2002, Brown was lauded as the 46th best fighter, of any weight, of the previous eighty years by the Associated Press in its End-of-the-Century boxing poll, as well as the fourth-best bantam. In 2006, the International Boxing Research Organization (IBRO) voted him the second-best bantam ever. He was inducted into *The Ring's* Boxing Hall of Fame, the International Boxing Hall of Fame, and the World Boxing Hall of Fame.

On the other hand, Pete Sanstol had become a relatively unknown in accounts of boxing history. People had forgotten that, during the time he was active, contemporary boxing experts—such as Madison Square Garden's Tom McCardle, *The Ring's* Ted Carroll, and Montreal's Elmer W. Ferguson, among countless others from Scandinavia, France, and Germany—acclaimed Sanstol a "master boxer," a "genius in the ring," "world class," and as one of the greatest of his division. Record books contained incomplete and inaccurate accounts of his fights; even four of his five world title bouts were never recorded as being for the championship. He was never listed as a former World Champion. He was never inducted into any boxing hall of fame. As far as most were concerned, Pete Sanstol was a nobody in boxing history—just a footnote as another loser to Panama Al Brown for the title.

But Sanstol's star has been continually rising over the past few years, and his memory continues to reverberate. In October 1998, a Web site devoted to the former World Champion was created and launched by your writer—based upon material Sanstol pasted in his scrapbooks. In 2000, BoxRec.com posted the most accurate version of Sanstol's fight record to-date—correctly noting for the first time ever that his Bell, Giroux, Huat, and Escobar fights were for the world title. Later that year Sanstol was elected into the World Boxing Hall of Fame. In 2005, his birthplace of Moi erected a monolith to his memory in the city park. And, in late 2006, the historians of the IBRO voted Sanstol the No. 21 All-Time Best Bantamweight.

He is now known by the historian and the fan as a Champion in every sense of the word. He truly was one of those who *did* take on all comers. He amassed a record any boxer would envy: 98-6-8. He was never knocked out or even knocked down for a count. And he always conducted himself in a dignified, honorable, and sportsman-like manner.

Today, Pete Sanstol's place in boxing history has been corrected. He has risen from a mere footnote to take a deserved place alongside bantamweight legends Sixto Escobar, and, yes—Panama Al Brown—as one of the greatest little boxers of his weight, *ever*.

Today, the score has been settled.



*"I didn't do anything but fight the best I knew,  
and give the people the best show I could,  
every time I went in the ring."*

~ Pete Sanstol ~

(*Montreal Daily Herald*, May 7, 1943)

*Ric Kilmer is an IBRO member and a BoxRec.com Editor. This entire two-part article was adapted—with updated material collected from his 2004 Montreal research trip, plus other new information—from his tribute site to Pete Sanstol, his grandfather.*

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Contact the author at: [ric@boxrec.com](mailto:ric@boxrec.com)  
A detailed Pete Sanstol biography starts here:  
<http://www.geocities.com/boxofdaylight/Moi.htm>