

Settling the Score

The Rivalry Between Panama Al Brown and Pete Sanstol

(Part I of II)

by Ric Kilmer



Parisian Origins & Title Aspirations

The hitherto untold rivalry between Panama Al Brown and Pete Sanstol has its origins in Paris, France. Brown, born in Panama, had taken up pugilism watching American sailors box. He was discovered by an American

The rich history of boxing includes often-read chapters chronicling rivalries of well-known legends. The *Muhammad Ali vs. Joe Frazier* trilogy stands out for many modern-day boxing fans as the classic rivalry. Others may point to the six-fight series between Sugar Ray Robinson and

Jake LaMotta. There are scores of others. But those who delve a little deeper than the casual fan, beyond the dog-eared pages of history, will be hard-pressed to find any mention whatsoever of the battle for supremacy between two of the greatest bantamweights of the early 1930s—Panama Al Brown and Pete Sanstol.

Huh? People might be able to identify the two battles they fought together, but do two fights really constitute a “rivalry”? Well, theirs had the elements of a classic rivalry. Here were two highly-regarded and capable fighters, each top-ranked for years. Their styles contrasted remarkably, yet blended well together. Brown, Latin-American, 5' 11" tall and black, was master of the darting left jab and lightning-quick right cross, brimming with defensive skill—obtaining most of his victories by decision. Sanstol, Nordic, 5' 3" small and white, was known for his speed, defense, and stamina—winning most of his bouts on points. Each had wonderful footwork. Both were star attractions wherever they appeared. Both were intelligent; each could fluently speak a handful of languages. Neither was ever stopped in his career. But for years during the time they both were tops in the bantamweight division, Sanstol attempted time and again to wrest the crown from Brown's dusky brow. One was glorified with Hall-of-Fame status, the other relegated to a footnote in history. The *Brown-Sanstol* story is more than the two classic fights they had. It is also about fights evaded and missed opportunities. It is about what went on behind-the-scenes for years. It is a fresh chapter of boxing history never before told. Until now.

manager, and brought to New York City in 1923. Compiling an impressive early record in America, Brown went to Paris in October 1926. *The Ring* magazine, August 1985, p. 27. That's when Pete Sanstol first saw him, Sanstol wrote in his memoirs. Sanstol, born in Norway, had started his own professional boxing career only a few months earlier, with a first-round knockout of veteran Britisher Bert Gallard. He was invited to Berlin, where he trained that summer in Max Schmeling's camp, before moving on to Paris in late 1926. Brown and Sanstol's paths must certainly have first crossed in the City of Lights.

American manager Lew Burston “discovered” Sanstol in Paris. By mid-1927 Sanstol had moved his headquarters to the Bay Ridge district of Brooklyn, New York, where he graduated from the club preliminaries to become, along with Al Brown, one of the world's top bantamweight boxers by 1929. *The Ring*, August 1931, p. 9.

The bantamweight world title had been vacant since 1927, when the New York State Athletic Commission decided that the winner of the May 22, 1929 Fidel LaBarba-Kid Chocolate bout would be the logical successor. Newspapers reported that the bout was "for what is unofficially considered the world's bantamweight championship. Though the New York boxing commission has not officially designated the bout a title affair, it has 'strongly advised' the pair to weigh in at 118 pounds, the bantam limit." When both fighters entered the ring overweight, that took care of that idea.

Fidel LaBarba and Kid Chocolate having failed to heed the suggestion of the Boxing Commission and make the bantamweight limit for their fight in the New York Coliseum last Wednesday night, the Solons decided to give ear to the plea of Al Brown that he be given an opportunity to prove he is the best 118-pound fighter here, there and everywhere. Hence they announced they would start the ball a-rolling by matching him with Vidal Gregorio, Pete Sanstol or Kid Chocolate, the fight to be held in the Queensboro Stadium on June 11. On that night the Blowdeo will be for the benefit of the National Sports Alliance Relief Fund. It will have to be either Gregorio or Sanstol for Brown. Al is definitely off the Havana Kid's list of eligibles.

The World (New York, NY, May 25, 1929, p. 11.)

Sanstol was not preferred by Brown for some unknown reason. Gregorio was selected instead. This may have been the first time that the Panamanian sought to evade him, if that is in fact what happened. Instead, the Norwegian was relegated to a preliminary on this card with Sammy Farber. (The card became postponed a week, to June 18.)

The Brown-Gregorio bout originally had not designated as being for any title whatsoever. But then both Brown and Gregorio offered to fight for no compensation whatsoever, which "staggered" the NYSAC. "The Boxing Commissioners couldn't believe their ears. When they recovered they announced that the winner would be recognized by them as the 'defending' bantam champion." *The World*, May 29, p. 13.

Three days before the June 18 Al Brown-Vidal Gregorio fight the *New York Times* had reported: "At its [NYSAC] meeting yesterday... [d]ecision was reserved on the question of designating a main bout Tuesday night at the National Sports Alliance Relief Fund benefit show. Al Brown is to battle Vidal Gregorio *virtually* for the bantamweight title." (Emphasis added.)

The *New York Times* reported on the day of the fight:

A battle which is expected to have its sequel in the production of a world's bantamweight champion... is... scheduled for tonight. It is this contest which is expected to end with an acceptable claimant of the vacated bantamweight title established. Brown has earned recognition by the National Boxing Association and through ring conquests here

and in Europe has mowed down all opposition. The Brown-Gregorio bout lacks the Boxing Board's official backing as a title match, but it is indicated that the winner may be looked upon with favor.

After Brown had defeated Gregorio, *The World* reported June 19 that the NYSAC gave him "the novel title of 'defending champion.'" In his June 21 column entitled "Pardon My Glove," Ned Brown quoted one Mike Karem as saying, "It was not for the world's title." Joe Morris, manager of British bantamweight world champion Teddy Baldock, "declared Baldock had just as much right to consider himself bantamweight champion as Brown." *The World*, June 28, p. 9. In time, however, it seems that everyone concerned came to accept that Brown had won the vacant NYSAC title with this bout, and that is what the history books record to this day.

There may have been another reason the NYSAC had decided the Brown-Gregorio winner would be anointed its "defending champion." It may have been led to believe that Brown was recognized by the National Boxing Association as *its* bantam king at this time. When he and Brown arrived back to New York from Europe in mid-May, Brown's manager Dave Lumiansky informed the press (*The World*, May 16, p. 13) :

Half-baked titles are important in Europe but they mean little or nothing here," said Lumiansky. "Brown strengthened his N.B.A. championship abroad by defeating Bernasconi, the International Boxing Union champion, in Madrid. That victory gave him two legs on the world's title, and a match with the winner of the La Barba-Chocolate fray should result in a generally recognized 118-pound king. The situation appears to be close to a definite settlement for the first time in three years."

But, on July 10, three weeks after his boxer had won the so-called NYSAC "world championship," the Illinois Athletic Commission "criticized Lumiansky for having spread reports in the United States and abroad that Brown was recognized by the National Boxing Association as bantamweight champion." *The World*, July 11, 1929, p. 13. (The NBA was headquartered in Chicago at this time.)

Brown was *not* the NBA champion. (And whether Brown had won the IBU title in Madrid by defeating Bernasconi, as Lumiansky trumpeted, still demands confirmation to this day.)

A wire report in the June 19 *Tacoma News Tribune* (Tacoma, WA, USA) divulged the NBA's true position:

The Panama Negro, one of the cleverest boxers in the business, also lays claim to the National Boxing Association's 118-pound championship. Brown claims he was recognized as champion by Tom Donohue, Connecticut boxing commissioner, when Donohue was president of the N.B.A. Donohue, however, later was deposed and the N.B.A. announced last night that it no longer recognized any one as king of the 188[sic]-pounders.

The next day the *News Tribune* continued: “[Brown] holds no title as far as the National Boxing Association is concerned. Paul Prehn, president of the N.B.A., last night said the organization recognizes no one as champion of the 118-pound division, but plans an elimination contest to select a titleholder.”

There would be no NBA elimination tournament. Instead, on October 7, the NBA announced that, following a telegraphic conference among its members, it had proclaimed Panama Al Brown its World Bantamweight Champion. *New York Times*, Oct. 8, p. 24. (One critic would later remark that Brown had “won” the NBA title by ballot, not battle.)

Over the course of the next year Brown successfully defended his title twice: against Johnny Erickson and Eugene Huat.

Meanwhile Sanstol had been taking on the best bantams around, amassing a splendid winning record. He remained highly-rated by the summer of 1930, and deemed a worthy challenger for Brown's title. (In late 1929 Sanstol had become seriously ill with inflamed tonsils. He had been out of commission for months before making a comeback. August 1931 *The Ring*.)

Sanstol Finished Up Hard Training Ready to Battle Scalfaro at Stadium

Following a week-end of intensive training, Pete Sanstol last night reported himself at the peak of physical condition for the most important engagement of his spectacular boxing career—his ten-round battle on Wednesday night at the baseball stadium with heavy-hitting Joe Scalfaro, New York Italian bantam, who is ranked among the leaders on the continent....

The match is the most important Sanstol has ever undertaken. With some thirty straight victories behind him on American soil, in addition to his array of European successes, Sanstol proved his titular worth by beating Dominic Bernasconi, champion of Europe, in clean-cut fashion here. Bernasconi immediately afterwards met Al Brown, the recognized world's champion, in New York, and not only gave the elongated negro a terrific battle, but floored him for a count of nine. Off that bout, Sanstol comes in for titular consideration which a victory over Scalfaro, best of the New York bantams, would clinch beyond any dispute. Sanstol is backed by strong interests in his bid for the world's title and if the blonde tornado wins on Wednesday night, it is entirely likely he will have the backing of the Athletic Commission of the city in his bid for title honors, now that he has established residence here. A Labor Day open-air title battle between Sanstol and Brown would be a tremendous card for the city, and it is quite possible that this might materialize.

The Gazette (Montreal, QC, Canada), August 30, 1930.

Sanstol beat Scalfaro. He would then be beaten, for the first time in his career, by the Italian druggist. (Sanstol had lost only once before, by disqualification to Joey Eulo.) Sanstol and Scalfaro drew in a third fight.

Yet a bout with Panama Al Brown never did “materialize,” once again.

From the 1931 *Everlast Boxing Record*, p. 43:

Just what has Sanstol accomplished in the boxing game? Well, to take the word of Tom McArdle, a famous matchmaker of Madison Square Garden, Pete is looked upon as the long-sought fighting terror among bantams to restore that division to the place it once held when it boasted such warriors as Jimmy Barry, Terry McGovern, Kid Williams, Pete Herman, etc., just to mention a few....

Pete's fight against Scalfaro, who boasts the first knockdown scored over Kid Chocolate in this country, was the highlight of entertainment during the indoor season at Madison Square Garden. It was nip and tuck for the entire ten rounds, with the fans shouting themselves into hysterics.

Interviewed after the fight, Sanstol explained why he is the most sought-after bantam in the eastern United States and Canada.

"I like to fight fellows like Scalfaro. He is always tearing in with his dangerous wallop and one must fight fast and furious unless he wants to be knocked out. Chasing after a boy who will not fight is not only tiring but discouraging. I like to fight. And if my opponent meets me that way the duration of the round passes only too quickly, the fans get a run for their money, and I am happy."

If other fighters would follow that line of reasoning the game will be better, for the more Sanstols it will bring to the game.

Valhalla, the fighting heaven of the gods. That undoubtedly is Pete's aim. It is safe to assume that Sanstol has found his Valhalla in the squared circle.

Sanstol never heard a word from Al Brown about a possible title shot. So he went directly to the New York State Athletic Commission to formally challenge Brown. Just before Christmas, 1930, the NYSAC met to address Sanstol's challenge, among other things.

SANSTOL SEEKS TITLE BOUT Norwegian Challenges Brown, Bantamweight Champion

Dave Lumiansky, manager of Al Brown, recognized as world's bantamweight champion, appeared with notification that Brown had defended his title against Eugene Huat in Paris Oct. 5, but asserted his readiness to match Brown against any qualified challenger for a bout within two weeks at any time.

Brown Challenged by Sanstol

Lumiansky's appearance before the solons resulted from a demand by the commission last week that Brown accept a championship match within fifteen days. Pete Sanstol, Norwegian lad, challenged Brown, and Secretary Bert Stand said this match would be approved when and if it is signed. Harry Fierro, Chicago bantamweight, also deposited a challenge.

New York Times, Dec. 24, 1930.

Yet another proposed Brown-Sanstol match never materialized. Perhaps Lumiansky had used his "powerful connections" with New York boxing officials to squelch Sanstol's challenge. (*The Ring*, August 1985, p. 27, confirmed that he had such connections.) Rather than defend his NYSAC or NBA titles any further, Brown remained in Europe, where he took on featherweights. Sanstol, once again denied a title shot, began to feel that the New York officials were not supporting him. "[I was] discouraged by the rather apathetic reception I had been given and [thus] headed north to Montreal." *Montreal Herald*, May 15, 1931.

The Montreal authorities would give him the respect he felt he had earned and deserved. Best of all, they would give him what he had been fighting so long and so hard for all these many years—a shot at the title.

Bantamweight Champion of the World!

By early 1931 Pete Sanstol was living and fighting in Montreal under the direction of his new manager, Raoul Godbout—Leo (Kid) Roy's former manager. At this time Montreal was fast becoming the Mecca of professional bantamweight boxing, due to its having done more than any other city to promote it recently. Even then-NBA President Edward Foster was to acknowledge by 1934: "I consider Montreal the logical bantamweight capital of the world." *The Standard* (Montreal) June 21, 1935. (The Montreal Athletic Commission, created in 1922, became affiliated with the NBA. Montreal exchanged and recognized the rulings and champions of the New York State Athletic Commission also, and *vice-versa*. In April 1927 the Canadian Boxing Federation affiliated with the NBA. The CBF was an alliance of all boxing commissions in Canada, including Montreal's. Some federation members became unhappy with the way the NBA handled matters and broke away from it. The CBF also broke off relations with the NBA at some time; it then considered affiliating with the British Control Board—according to the April 30, 1930 *Winnipeg Free Press*.)

At this time the National Boxing Association rated Pete Sanstol the top challenger for Panama Al Brown's bantamweight title, as had a consensus of sports writers. (*The Ring* would rate him behind Newsboy Brown in its Annual Ratings for 1930 and 1931.) But he still could not get that title shot with Brown. Meanwhile the time restriction within which Brown was required to defend his NBA title was due to expire April 4. *Montreal Herald*, May 19. The time limit for defending his New York State Athletic Commission title was also running out.

From Montreal's *The Gazette*, Feb. 18, 1931:

Boxers who battle Monday night at the St. Denis Theatre on the second professional fistic bill to be staged in Montreal this season swung into livelier training yesterday afternoon at various city gymnasiums.

Pete Sanstol, who returns to Montreal rings to meet Bobby Leitham, the Verdun flash, after a brilliant invasion of New York rings in which he fought his way to recognition as one of the world's leading bantams and challenged officially for the title in that division, was spurred on in his work by reports of the fine display Leitham had given the previous night at Syracuse, N.Y. Boxing in a ten-round main there, the speedy, clever Verdun lad slashed out a decisive win in ten rounds over Frankie Wallace, a lad highly rated in northern New York fistic circles. Leitham returned last night, having come through the bout without a scratch, and, after laying off today, will resume light training tomorrow.

Leitham, while unquestionably in for the hardest bout he ever has undertaken, is brimful of confidence over the outcome. He believes he can hold his own in point of speed with the whirlwind Norseman, and that he will out-slug Sanstol in punching exchanges. A win over Sanstol would rate Leitham high. Sanstol has already been nominated by the Montreal Commission to the National Boxing Association as its choice for world's bantam champion, and in the year's ring ratings has been placed right up with the leaders. He is now in line for a shot at the title, which is generally conceded to Al. Brown. Sanstol is by far the most formidable boxer Leitham has met.

A chronic ear injury prevented Leitham from fighting Sanstol, so Harry Hill was substituted and lost. Sanstol defeated top-ranked bantams Phil Tobias and Frisco Grande soon afterwards.

In early spring, Armand Vincent, a Montreal sports promoter, signed Pete Sanstol to fight Archie Bell. Bell had been considered a top contender for the bantam title since 1927. By early 1931 he was sometimes rated the Number One Contender in front of Sanstol, but most "official" rankings listed Sanstol before Bell.

That Archie Bell, of Brooklyn, and Pete Sanstol, now of Montreal, will fight here Wednesday, May 20, at the Forum, in the most important encounter that has developed in world bantamweight ranks, became definite today when Promoter Armand Vincent, after angling for the match for a fortnight, announced that both boxers were signed.

Offering the biggest guarantee since Leo (Kid) Roy and Louis (Kid) Kaplan, then world's champion, fought their memorable match here early in 1926, Promoter Vincent secured the Bell-Sanstol bout by offering the boxers 40 per cent of the gross house, thus outbidding other promoters who sought the important tilt. After Sanstol knocked out the highly-touted Phil Tobias, and then Frisco Grande in New York bouts, Garden authorities realized that his high rating by the Montreal Commission, the National Boxing Association, and sports writers consensus had some real foundation, and, at once sought to pit him against Bell, New York's best bantam and best box-office attraction in that division. In the 1931 Everlast consensus, Bell had been rated before Sanstol...

Meanwhile, Promoter Vincent is already planning to match the winner with Al. Brown, the recognized bantam champion, now in Europe meeting and beating all comers. He this week wired an offer of \$7,500 flat to Brown to meet either Sanstol or Bell here.

The Gazette, May 9, 1931.

BELL-SANSTOL BOUT FOR WORLD'S TITLE
Montreal Athletic Commission Rules
Fight at Forum for Bantam Honors
AL BROWN SILENT
Refuses to Answer Challenge Made by Sanstol
N.B.A. Asked to Recognize Winner

Montreal will have the first world's fistic championship event staged in Canada in more than a quarter of a century when, at the Forum next Wednesday night, Pete Sanstol of Norway and Archie Bell of Brooklyn will meet in a bout that was designated by the Athletic Commission of the city of Montreal as being for the world's bantamweight crown. Endorsation of the Commission ruling, based on practical facts, will be asked from leading boxing-control bodies on the continent....

The titular tag was attached to the match yesterday following the failure of the recognized title-holder, Al. Brown, to answer repeated challenges to meet the winner, and the fact also that Brown has out-grown the division in point of poundage. The Montreal Commission made one stipulation in making this ruling. This was to the effect that at least forty-eight hours before the match, Bell and Sanstol should sign contracts and post forfeits, guaranteeing to meet within 60 days the challenger named by a consensus of boxing commissions in a match for the championship....

The Commission action developed from the fact that Armand Vincent, promoter of the Sanstol-Bell match, had cabled Brown offering him a guarantee of \$7,500, with the option of 37 ½ per cent, to meet the Bell-Sanstol winner. The cable, filed with the Montreal Commission, was ignored, and this together with press reports that Brown has weighed in the vicinity of 128 pounds in all his recent British and European matches convinced the Commission that the champion recognizes he can no longer make 118 pounds, the bantam limit....

The Gazette, May 14.

“The idea of a title shot may have been an illusion before, but it is an actuality today and I intend to make the best of my opportunity, and bring the bantam crown to Montreal,” said Sanstol. *Montreal Herald*, May 15.



BELL HERE TODAY TO SIGN FOR BOUT
New York Battler and Sanstol Meet Commission
This Morning at City Hall

With the arrival in Montreal this morning of Archie Bell, interest in the Wednesday night battle at the Forum between this New York bantam star,

and Pete Sanstol of Montreal, will be transferred to their appearance before the Athletic Commission of the city of Montreal to sign contracts for bouts to follow their Wednesday night meeting.

So far as the Athletic Commission of the city of Montreal is concerned, the Wednesday night winner will be recognized as world's bantam champion, the bout being labeled of titular calibre in just the same way as the New York Commission, the Pennsylvania Commission and the Illinois State Commission from time to time designate matches as being of title calibre. The Montreal Commission has stipulated that the Wednesday night winner must sign in advance to fight Newsboy Brown, Vidal Gregorio, or any other ranking contender named by the National Boxing Association within 60 days of the bout here. It is for that purpose that the boxers meet the Commission at eleven o'clock this morning at the City Hall.

The Gazette, May 18.

BELL ARRIVES FOR MATCH TOMORROW
Boxers Sign With Commission

Archie Bell and Pete Sanstol, who oppose each other Wednesday night at the Montreal Forum in a bout designated by the Athletic Commission of the City of Montreal as being for the world's bantamweight boxing championship, both signed contracts yesterday to fight any opponent named by the Montreal Commission, through the National Boxing Association, or any other controlling body, within sixty days of May 20, in defence of the title. This was the stipulation made by the commission in declaring this a title bout, because of the failure of Al Brown, holder of the championship, to reply to offers to fight the winner; because it is believed he can no longer make the bantam limit of 118 pounds; and because his time, under the N.B.A. ruling for defending his title, has elapsed by more than a month....

The New York Commission, with which the Montreal board exchanges and recognizes rulings, wrote that, under their rating, Brown's time for defending his title had not yet expired, although it has done so with the National Association. The New York body invited the Montreal Commission to re-open the question of recognizing the Bell-Sanstol winner as champion immediately Brown's

time for defending his title had expired with the New York body.

The Gazette, May 19.



Sanstol & Bell Signing Ceremony

SANSTOL AND BELL READY FOR MATCH

Bantamweight Contenders Go Through
Tapering-Off Paces for Fight Tonight
WEIGH IN TODAY

Both Expect to Make 118-Pound Mark Easily
Huge Crowd Expected to Watch Fixture

Buoyed by the possibility that the winner will be recognized by the powerful National Boxing Association, and by the New York State Commission, and certainly by the Athletic Commission of Montreal and the Canadian Boxing Federation as the world's bantamweight boxing champion, Pete Sanstol of Norway and Archie Bell of Brooklyn, battle tonight at the Forum in what rates as the most interesting and important match in the history of Montreal fisticuffs. It is expected that a capacity house will see the first match ever staged in Montreal that was given a world's title rating.

Sanstol's unending speed, his amazing stamina and ability like that of the late Harry Greb to hammer away ceaselessly with flying fists has made the blonde Norseman favorite to win the decision if the match goes the scheduled ten rounds, while the cleverness, close-range ability and heavy body-punching of Bell have made him the likely winner in case of a knockout. Over all Sanstol is rated a slight favorite.

The championship aspects of the match were enhanced yesterday by two developments. One was that General John V.

Clinnin, president of the National Boxing Association, advised the Montreal Commission that the suggestion of the Montreal Commission to recognize the winner as the world's champion, in the failure of Al. Brown to fight the winner, that a mail vote will be taken at once on the question. As Sanstol is rated the No. 1 challenger by the N.B.A. and as it always has been the policy of this progressive organization to disregard those champions who will not fight, there is every prospect that the vote will be in the affirmative. It will take three or four days to complete this undertaking as over thirty states, as well as certain Canadian commissions, Cuba and Mexico are all affiliated with the N.B.A.

The New York Commission left an open door to the Montreal body in the matter. Under New York rules, it appears Brown's time for defence of his title has not yet expired, but the New York Commission is interested in the Montreal plan and asked that the Montreal body communicate with them, immediately after the time has expired....

The Gazette

SANSTOL FIGHTS WAY TO TOP

Blonde Dynamo Drives Way To Bantam Crown
By Sheer Fury Of Pace

By E. W. Ferguson
Montreal Daily Herald

A tiny blonde dynamo, with the face of a choir-boy and the heart of his Viking forbears, sits today on the world's bantamweight throne, and a worthy holder he is, too.

By sheer sustained blazing fury of attack, Pete Sanstol last night at the Forum out-lasted and out-finished Archie Bell, clever Brooklynite, in a bout which was ruled by the Athletic Commission of the city as being for the world's title because of the continued evasion of champion Al. Brown....

Cut under the right eye in the first round when their heads crashed, Sanstol fought the whole route with a thin trickle of blood running from the wound. But, with his usually-smiling and pleasant mouth drawn thin into hard grim lines, his blue eyes blazing with the light of battle, he pitched in, refused to be discouraged when the cleverness of

Bell seemed to set his attack at nought, and finally wore his foeman down.

After giving a skillful display from the start, Bell shot his final arrow in the seventh frame. He had lost the fifth as Sanstol blazed in, knocking down the piston-like left hand of the Brooklynite, and the sixth had been even, Bell coming back to make a stubborn stand. But in the seventh, the Brooklynite "shot the works." He lashed out with vicious right-hand punches at short range, bringing a thin trickle of blood from the corner of Sanstol's mouth, and beat a steady tattoo on Sanstol's face with his darting left. Sanstol was bleeding from the face at the end, and it was Bell's round.

But it was his last. He hooked a wicked short left to Sanstol's chin just as the eighth round opened, but Sanstol, in a fury of fists, tore in with both hands flying. Gloves were everywhere. Bell, cool and efficient was ducking, dodging, missing them by fractions, but he couldn't miss all. A leaping right to the head drove him back, and the little blonde fury was after him, head down, fists flying. A perfect one-two punch bounced Bell into the ropes, a looping right to the jaw and a left to the body battered him around. Only the bell halted Sanstol's driving attack.

That offensive was sustained right to the end. Sanstol tore in for the ninth, forcing Bell to hold as he belted away to the body. At close range, even the ring-craft of Bell did not avail, for Sanstol wrenched his arms loose and drove short, vicious uppercuts through to the chin. Bell was decidedly tired when the bell ended the round.

The tenth was similar. Sanstol kept on driving in, forcing Bell to hold, driving him into the ropes. Bell's rapier left darted out, but it could not frustrate the Sanstol attacks, and the blonde was swarming over his foe at the end.

Sanstol had five rounds, according to this writer's tabulation, the fourth, fifth, eighth, ninth and tenth. Bell had two, the second and seventh, the rest were fairly even. Bell gave a brilliant boxing display in the second, as Sanstol rushed, stabbing him with his left and hooking in harder rights. Sanstol first struck his stride in the fourth, when he fired furious volleys to the head, then right at the end of the round, ripped both hands to the body and set Bell on his heels with a right cross that clearly shook his opponent.

Sanstol won strictly on aggressiveness, coupled with boundless stamina and ability to carry on

indefinitely at a whirlwind pace. It was the finest fight he ever has fought in a Montreal ring, a clean sporting battle on both sides.

Ferguson later wrote that this bout, "which goes into Canadian fistic history as a world's championship mill, was Sanstol's masterpiece. He gave as pretty an exhibition of boxing, hard hitting and speed as ever has been seen in the Dominion, and with the victory, Pete endeared himself to the Canadians." *The Ring*, August 1931, p. 46.

MONTREAL BOXER IS BANTAM CHAMPION Canadian Norwegian Defeats Bell Claim to World's Title Recognized

The claim of Pete Sanstol of Norway to the world's bantamweight boxing championship was materially strengthened to-day as a result of his 10-round victory over Archie Bell of Brooklyn last night. Sanstol was awarded seven rounds while two went to Bell and one was even. The verdict of the referee and two judges was unanimous. By virtue of his victory, Sanstol is recognized by the National Boxing Association and the Canadian Boxing Commission as the world's champion. Al Brown, present title-holder as far as many boxing fans and the New York State Boxing Commission are concerned, was dethroned by the National and Montreal bodies because he failed to defend his crown within a stipulated time.

Toronto Daily Star, May 21, 1931.

Despite what the *Toronto Star* reported about Sanstol being recognized by the NBA, that powerful body was still deciding what to do, and still trying to get Brown to face Sanstol. The *Montreal Herald* later explained the situation on July 4:

The N.B.A. deferred title recognition to Sanstol only because Brown, through his manager Dave Lumiansky, had faithfully promised that on his return from Europe, where he was fighting overweight bouts, he would at once meet the contender nominated by the N.B.A. That contender, already named by the N.B.A. championship committee, is Sanstol, but approached this by the Montreal matchmaker [Armand Vincent], Lumiansky flatly refused to take the bout, and declared, moreover, that he

would not fight for any title in America, but was returning to France to meet Emil "Spider" Pladner in a championship match in October.

Sanstol's Title Defenses

One week after winning the bantam championship, Sanstol defeated Benny Brostoff in Quebec City. He then prepared to defend *his* title against the first challenger selected by the Montreal Commission. And that challenger was none other than his friend, former sparring partner, and the current Canadian champion, Arthur Giroux.

SANSTOL IS READY TO BATTLE GIROUX



Arthur Giroux

Winner of Wednesday's Bout Will Be Given Match With Eugene Huat

With a heavy week-end of fistic toll behind them, Pete Sanstol and Arthur Giroux today face the final day of strenuous work for their bantamweight championship match at the Forum Wednesday night. Sanstol, awarded a title by the Montreal Commission when he defeated high-ranking Archie Bell, of Brooklyn, will be defending the honor against Giroux, for the latter made it clear on the week-end that, after two weeks of the most intensive training, he would be well under the 118-pound limit. Giroux's effort marks the first occasion on which a French-Canadian ever has fought for world bantam honors; the first defence of a world title in a Montreal ring to a decision; the first fifteen-round match held in Montreal under commission rule, and the first time in modern history that a champion has risked his title in less than thirty days after winning it, and without compulsion from a ruling body.

Sanstol gave further proof over the week-end that he will really be a fighting champion, for it was announced last night on his behalf that if he were

successful in turning back the rugged thrusts of Giroux he will meet Eugene Huat, heavy-hitting French fighter who recently battled Al Brown over the fifteen-round trail in Paris, in a title match here. Huat has formally challenged to the Montreal Commission, but the challenge has been tabled pending the outcome of Wednesday night's tilt.

SANSTOL SWEEPS TO DECISIVE WIN OVER ART GIROUX

Norwegian Bantam Has Wide Margin
in Hectic 15-Round Bout at Forum
COURAGEOUS STAND

Loser Takes Terrific Pounding in Final Rounds
By L.S.B. Shapiro

Pete Sanstol, battling blonde Norwegian, kindly of face but with murder in his hands, bobbed and pounded his way to victory last night over Arthur Giroux, bantamweight champion of Canada, before a shrieking crowd of almost 10,000 at the Forum. And in sweeping to a decision victory, Sanstol shared the evening's honors in the eyes of the spectators with the swaying battered figure of his opponent, pitiful in appearance as he floundered through 15 punishing rounds, but making as breath-taking and tear-jerking a stand against ignominious defeat as the long, colorful, yet somewhat indifferent history of the Montreal ring has yet recorded.

The net result of the dramatic struggle was that Sanstol kept that piece of the world's bantamweight championship he is entitled to as a result of the Montreal Athletic Commission's award and that it sent the largest crowd to watch a boxing bout here in the past seven years winding out of the amphitheatre talking excitedly in the subdued manner of a gathering that has witnessed a great emotional exhibition.

Stepping into the ring as nervous as an amateur making his first public appearance, Giroux smiled in a sickly manner, turned in his corner and made a short silent prayer. Then the battle was on and for five rounds the Frenchman tried to make the fight and failed. Against the speedy cleverness of Sanstol, Giroux's rippling muscles sent his gloves flying through the air and hitting nothing until he was exhausted. Then came the turning point in the sixth. Still strong and willing, Giroux rushed desperately from his corner, reached his long left out to touch Sanstol's mouth, and swung heavily with his right and

followed in with a long left hook. Neither blow landed and Giroux lost his balance, whirled about the centre of the ring and finally landed seated comfortably on the floor of the roped circle. He scampered to his feet but in the split second that he rested on the floor he carried a puzzled, helpless and exhausted look. He was a beaten man.

The eighth round saw the virtual end of the bout. Coming out circiously(?), Sanstol rushed Giroux to the ropes, poked him into position with a darting left and then whipped over a terrific right cross to the point of the jaw. Giroux sagged to the floor, shook his head and crawled to his feet at the count of seven. Sanstol rushed him again and he reeled along the side of the ring, holding the ropes for support and fighting back instinctively to last out the round.

From then on it was his great heart that kept him on his feet. Sanstol was no longer the bobbing boxing master. His pleasant profile was distorted by grim lips, sagging as the ends as he tore in to finish off his opponent. Tiring himself rapidly, Sanstol summoned his strength to cuff Giroux all around the ring for seven rounds. Sometimes he floored him with a well-timed punch, sometimes Giroux reeled off his balance in a dizzy circle and fell, but he always got up, assumed his fighting pose and made instinctive efforts to fight. Between rounds, the excited advice of his seconds seemed to have no effect. He seemed oblivious to everything except that he knew he must assume a fighting pose and throw out punches.

For seven rounds, from the eighth to the fourteenth, the process was the same, and great a fighter as Sanstol is, he could not down the Frenchman for the count. Led to his corner by the referee at the end of the fourteenth, Giroux came out for the last round, floundering at the knees but still keeping his head well up. Sanstol boxed him into position and flung a right to the jaw. Giroux went down for a count of eight, lifted himself to his feet, only to take another vicious smash to the side of the head.

He dropped heavily, crawled over the ropes, and lifted himself painfully as the referee counted nine. He fell into a clinch, but Sanstol cuffed him against the ropes and for the third time in the round Giroux went down. Glassy-eyed and staggering he came up for more at the count of two, only to stagger and fall again as he tried to go into a clinch. He wouldn't stay down. He rose immediately, despite the violent shouts of his seconds to take a longer count. The round was

almost over, and Sanstol summoned his last strength to get a knockout, but his right hand punch only downed Giroux for a count of three, and as the courageous Frenchman rose at the count of three for the fifth time, and went into a clinch, a sympathetic bell sounded the end of the fight.

To raise Sanstol's arm in victory was a mere formality. The Norwegian gave a great display of boxing prowess and ring generalship and secured for himself a place among the great bantams of the world. But the wild cheers of the gathering when Giroux, swathed in towels, lurched across the ring to congratulate the winner, proved that the stand of the loser was recognized and admired.

The margin of victory was terrific. Sanstol clearly took twelve of the fifteen rounds, two of the early stanzas were even and Giroux took the first by a shade only on account of the fact that he did everything, landed all the punches that were landed and missed all that were missed. Sanstol proved himself a great tactician. He let Giroux outpunch himself for the first few rounds until he had the Frenchman thoroughly puzzled and exhausted and then proceeded about the business of winning the fight. That he was robbed of a knockout only by a great exhibition of stamina cannot discredit him. He will be matched with Eugene Huat, bantamweight champion of France, here in the near future.

Both articles from *The Gazette*.

In the early summer of 1931, the influential *The Ring* magazine came out with its August issue, featuring none-other than Pete Sanstol on its cover. Inside was a highly-flattering article about Sanstol written by long-time *Montreal Herald* Sports Editor Elmer W. Ferguson—an unabashed Sanstol fan. But Ferguson had some harsh words for Panama Al Brown. "In Sanstol the Canadians know they have a champion who will fight. He is ready to settle the matter of supremacy in the bantam class with Al Brown or any other bantamweight of note, but Brown prefers to remain in Europe to pick his marks rather than take a chance against Canada's recognized leaders." Page 8.



Eddie Borden, in his August 1931 *The Ring* magazine column, "A Corner in the Fistic Market," said that "Al

Brown is showing plenty of activity in the featherweight class but is apparently neglecting the bantams. In England, Brown kayoed Teddy Baldock in twelve rounds and lost on a foul to Johnny Cuthbert in eight. Pete Sanstol, most prominent contender, is showing plenty of pep. During the month he scored over Art Giroux, Archie Bell and Benny Brostoff." Borden listed his Top 10 Contenders for what he considered the "vacant" bantamweight title: Al Brown, Pete Sanstol, Newsboy Brown, Vidal Gregorio, Archie Bell, Art Giroux, Jimmy Thomas, Willie Davies, Lew Farber and Mose Butch. Page 48.

Certainly Brown and his manager David Lumiansky had to be embarrassed by all this negative publicity. Lumiansky purchased himself a ticket to Montreal, and headed to its judicial system to stem the damage to his boxer's name and championship status.

Lumiansky Comes to Town—to Sue

Pete Sanstol's next-scheduled title defense was against Eugene Huat, the Bantamweight Champion of France and former Flyweight Champion of Europe. Promoter Armand Vincent was still attempting to sign Panama Al Brown to meet the winner of the *Huat-Sanstol* fight for the undisputed world title. In response to Vincent's repeated efforts to have Brown meet Huat or Sanstol, Lumiansky wired from Chicago, after first meeting with NBA officials, that he would accept Vincent's offer, provided, among other things, "that President of National Association referee contest without judges...."

"As Sanstol is recognized in Montreal as world's champion, it is most unlikely that the Montreal Commission would tolerate any suggestion to change their usual judging procedure on Brown's account. The Commission will take up the matter at once, but it is the Commission's policy that *Brown comes in here as a challenger* and that the usual judging procedure will be followed." *Montreal Herald*, July 8. (Emphasis added.)

Dave Lumiansky, manager of Al. Brown, recognized in many places, but not in Montreal, as bantam champion, yesterday notified promoter Armand Vincent and the Athletic Commission of the city of Montreal, that he would be here today to "consult his solicitors in preparation for legal action to protect our interests," whatever that means.

The Montreal Commission several weeks ago came to the conclusion that Brown was attempting to evade the promises he made to defend his title against the N.B.A. nominee, who was Pete Sanstol.

Brown's time for a title defense expired long ago, while he was fighting overweight matches in Europe, and when he made no answers to proposals to fight Sanstol here, the Montreal Commission decided to give the negro the go-by, and to recognize the winner of the Sanstol-Archie Bell bout as champion—which is the Commission's own private affair.

Later, when Brown returned and still refused to go through with the Sanstol bout except on ridiculous terms, the Montreal Commission pressed the National Association to formally depose Brown and recognize Sanstol. No action in that respect has yet been taken.

Lumiansky, a shrewd pilot, may be opening a pseudo-court fight for publicity purposes, but doesn't seem to have much ground to stand on in the matter. The Montreal Commission can recognize anyone it wishes as champion. But the developments will be of interest. The Commission will continue to recognize the winner of Wednesday night's Sanstol-Huat match at the Forum as champion, regardless of Mr. Lumiansky.

Montreal Herald, July 24.

SANSTOL IN TOP SHAPE FOR BOUT Norwegian Battler Works Hard for Huat Fight Oblivious of Lawsuits

The law courts may resound with the voices of lawyers and witnesses this week as to who should be designated bantamweight champion of the world, and street corner arguments may be hectic and rife, but what honors are bestowed in this matter by the Montreal Athletic Commission will be definitely at stake and settled for in the proper setting, the ring at the Forum on Wednesday evening, when Pete Sanstol, the Norwegian battler who was awarded the local commission's title some six weeks ago, will clash with Eugene Huat, of France, in a bout which carries with victory what reputation and titles the battlers have.

The fact that Dave Lumiansky, manager of Al Brown, has arrived in the city threatening to ask the courts to restrain Sanstol from being billed world champion, merely adds flavor to the match on Wednesday. Ignorant, or maybe oblivious of the process of law, Sanstol has been working hard and effectively for his bout with the broad-shouldered

French bantam. The Norwegian, who makes his home in Montreal, has been active in defence of his honors and appears to be in fine shape, working briskly with a number of sparring partners on Saturday.

Under the astute eye of Gus Wilson, Huat has been mixing it with alacrity over the week-end, making up for the lay-off in training necessitated by a cut on his eye resulting from a training bout with Mickey Walker, now something of a figure in heavyweight circles. Huat, too, looks to be in great shape.

BOXERS END WORK FOR FORUM BOUT
Huat and Sanstol Display Impressive Form
in Final Training Sessions

Heavy training for Pete Sanstol and Eugene Huat, boxers who battle tomorrow night at the Forum for the world's bantam crown awarded Sanstol by the Athletic Commission of the city of Montreal when he defeated Archie Bell here in May, ended yesterday. Working out lightly because of the terrific heat and humidity, both Huat and Sanstol were inside the titular weight limit of 118 pounds, and their battle tomorrow night will therefore be recognized as involving the championship.

This latter, of course, is dependent upon whether Dave Lumiansky, manager of Al Brown and now in the city, succeeds in stopping the championship aspect of the fight. Lumiansky has retained legal advisers to protect the interests of the colored star, claiming that Brown is the world's champion, and that the promoter has no right to advertise the bout as being such. Others assert, though, Lumiansky's real purpose in coming to Montreal is to get a line on the two battlers, recognizing that unless Brown defends his title, as he has promised the National Boxing Association, he will be deprived of it by default.

Above two articles from *The Gazette* (the latter from July 28.)

Ending a long period of shilly shallying overweight non-title matches and evading by the elongated negro, who is recognized in some places, but not in all, as bantam champion, but who was given that title only on sufferance and did not win it

in a title match, the N.B.A. has come out flat-footed in the last bulletin on the Brown case. The bulletin says--

"...NOTICE HAS BEEN FORWARDED TO AL. BROWN THROUGH HIS MANAGER THAT HE MUST ARRANGE TO ACCEPT THIS OFFER [to fight the Huat-Sanstol winner], OR THE QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE MEMBERSHIP TO VACATE THE TITLE OF AL. BROWN FORTHWITH."

This leaves no avenue for escape. Lumiansky, in Montreal, has talked of opening a suit to prevent the use of the word "championship" in connection with the Sanstol-Huat contest tomorrow night, though no definite steps to that effect have, as yet, been taken.

Montreal Herald, July 28 (by Ted McCormick).

The fighters went through their final training grind during the past week; while their managers, various boxing commissions, a promoter and a world champion were involved in a fierce battle of the law courts, and last evening at ten minutes of eight o'clock, a contract was drawn up in the offices of Dr. Gaston R. Demers, chairman of the Athletic Commission of Montreal, which will place Al Brown, colored New Bedford boxer, and generally recognized as world bantamweight champion, in the same ring with the winner of the Sanstol-Huat bout within one month at the Forum.

Thus a troublesome situation has been definitely settled and Montreal fans will see the final outcome of a bitter struggle which has centred about the world's bantamweight crown for the past six months. Yesterday morning, David Lumiansky, manager of Al Brown, sought an injunction in the practice court before Justice Boyer, restraining Promoter Vincent and the principals from putting on tonight's boxing card at the Forum, and the case was scheduled to be decided this morning in court, but last evening's agreement assures the end of court proceedings and at once moves the scene of activities to their proper setting, the boxing ring...

President Demers and Promoter made the move that started a settlement. An appointment was made at Dr. Demers' office at two o'clock, and the gathering at that hour included several members of the commission, Promoter Vincent, David Lumiansky, Gus Wilson, Huat's handler, and Raoul Godbout, manager of Sanstol. For fully five

hours the arguments were heated, but the situation was finally being unraveled, and shortly after seven o'clock the principals had come to an agreement and, in the presence of a city attorney, the contract was drawn up.

The Gazette, July 29.

NBA President Clinnin's pressure on Lumiansky also had its effect. "[I]t was very largely due to his insistence that Brown was forced into the titular match with Sanstol here." *The Gazette*, August 17.



Lumiansky Signs

The contract stipulated that if Brown lost, Sanstol would grant him a return match within sixty days after January 1, 1932, and would not box a championship match in the meantime. If Huat won, the period was extended to 90 days. (The August 17 *Montreal Herald* reported that Sanstol planned to take a three-month rest after the fight anyway, free of all things boxing—win, lose, or draw.) The agreement also called for Gen. Clinnin to referee the bout, "a most unusual procedure [*sic*]." *Montreal Herald*, July 29.

The agreement paid Brown \$7,500—the largest ever given a boxer in Canada—with a guaranteed 37½ per cent of the gate. "Sanstol is recognized as champion by the Montreal Commission, and technically could have stood on his rights in making the match with Brown, by demanding the champion's 37½ per cent, in which the local Commission would have been obliged to support him. But Sanstol, in his anxiety to get the titular match, did not press his technical claims in this respect, agreeing to 25 per cent." *Montreal Herald*, August 11.

SANSTOL TO MEET BROWN
Out-Boxes Huat To Win Thrilling And Gory Tilt
Before Big Forum Crowd
by E. W. Ferguson, *Montreal Daily Herald*

The slugger finishes second to the boxer again.

Eugene Huat, broad-shouldered, heavy-fisted little son of old France, undeniably out-slugged Pete Sanstol in their ten-round thriller at the Forum last night for the right to meet Al. Brown here on August 26 in a match for the world's bantam title. His thudding gloves dropped Sanstol to his knees in the eighth, ripped two gashes in the Norseman's face and forced him to finish the battle streaming blood.

But, apart from these effective blows, Sanstol out-boxed the little Frenchman with the crashing fists that ripped with such lethal force from short range. Occasionally, but not often, Sanstol out-punched Huat, but always he out-boxed him, and on a straight points basis was clearly entitled to the unanimous decision he received from the three judges.

Sanstol ended the fight with blood streaming from two cuts in his face, one below the left eye, one beside the right. But bathed in blood, out-slugged in the finishing rounds, he at no time lost any of his speed nor boxing skill, and time after time, Huat's zipping gloves went streaking through empty air as their dancing, phantom target flitted out of reach on nimble toes and tireless legs.

The decision brought about the natural disagreement of opinion, those who fancy the straight puncher taking the side of Huat. But those who figure their boxing on points and who, in the seventh round, saw Huat miss sixteen straight punches, and saw Sanstol out-box him by a wide margin, conceded the edge to the Norwegian.

Those things are much in the point of view.

VERDICT GREETED BY BOOS
AS HUAT BOWS TO SANSTOL
Norwegian Bantam Gains Unpopular Victory
Before 9,000 at Forum
DISAPPROVAL GENERAL
Paul Lahaye, Commission Judge, Tears Up License
Winner Meets Brown Here August 25

In one of the fiercest fights witnessed in Montreal since the revival of boxing almost twenty years ago, Peter Sanstol, popular Norwegian battler now making his home in Montreal under local



Eugene Huat

management, was given a decision that was distasteful to the majority of the nine thousand who crowded the Forum last night to see Sanstol and Huat battle for the right to meet Panama Al Brown for the world's bantamweight championship here August 25.

The decision, in the opinion of many, did not add to the popularity of Pete Sanstol and it brought forth arguments, boos and hisses until long after the fighters had reached their dressing rooms.

Paul Lahaye, who for some time has served as a judge for the commission and at one time a champion fighter, created a great deal of excitement when he took his judge's licence out of his pocket, walked up to Dr. Gaston Demers, chairman of the commission, and tore it up in front of him, expressing disgust at the decision rendered in favor of Sanstol.

Many in the vast throng were willing to concede a draw to Sanstol, which would not have been giving him any the worst of it and would also have enabled him to retain the alleged world's title bestowed on him by the local commission. Such a decision would not have been unfair to a battler who came to Montreal and gave his best, earning for himself the friendship of hundreds who witnessed his exhibition of skill and cleverness.

There is no blaming Sanstol for the decision. He was there to do his part and even when it looked bad for him he never lost his smile and fought throughout the ten rounds in a courageous manner. There is no blame attached to any but the judges and when they handed in their slips each was for the blonde battler. There was a shock in store for many when Dr. Demers took the slips from the announcer and pointed to Sanstol. A victory must have even surprised Sanstol himself.

As one walked through the crowd to the exits of the building, right and left could be heard the same remarks and expressions of surprise, many pointing out that a draw should have been the worst given to the little French fighter.

The Gazette.

There were calls for an immediate rematch, but Sanstol wanted to move on. "I know I could get a lot of money for another match but I don't want the money. I want to fight Brown. That has been my goal for years, and now that it's in sight, I am not going to miss the chance." *Montreal Herald*, August 1.

Despite the July 28 agreement, Lumiansky continued to insist that Gen. John V. Clinnin, NBA President, be appointed both referee and sole judge of the Brown-Sanstol title fight. No other judges. In a telegram to reporters, Lumiansky said, "Neither bunk nor faked bally-hoo are my specialties. My agreement was distinctly that General Clinnin should have sole control in rendering the decision. I distinctly told promoter and commission that General Clinnin would not consent to being handcuffed and used as a dummy for bally-hoo purposes. Sanstol-Huat scandal is not going to be repeated at my expense." *The Gazette*, August 22.

A deadlock loomed as Lumiansky continued to declare that there had been "an agreement" that judges would be dispensed with, and the decision left entirely to Clinnin. But the promoter, commission, and contracts did not say that. "Lumiansky positively declares he will not allow Brown to enter the ring if the decision is to be given by anyone other than Clinnin." *New York Mirror*, August 19. But Clinnin supported the Commission in its position to refuse "to allow any manager to dictate the policies of the Commission." *Montreal Daily Herald*.

Then, the day before the bout, the parties reached a compromise. Dr. Gaston Demers, Commission Chairman, "was quite willing that the recently-enacted legislation of the Commission, not contained in the rule-book as published but an amendment whereby three judges officiate and the referee gives no decision, should be amended to the point that the referee gives a decision." Whereupon Lumiansky expressed his willingness to have Demers be one of the two judges. The other judge agreed upon was Thomas Murphy, President of the Ontario Athletic Commission and President of the Canadian Boxing Federation. This judging arrangement was unique in American pugilistic history" in that "[n]ever before had the heads of three notable boxing control boards occupied positions of the kind." *Montreal Herald*, August 24.

Lumiansky did manage to get the gloves changed from those traditionally used so that Sanstol wouldn't be able to score a knock-out. In fact, no bantam could, as the *Montreal Herald* recalled four years later, on August 4, 1935:

[T]he 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.

The long-awaited world title fight between Panama Al Brown and Pete Sanstol was finally about to materialize. As the National Boxing Association had proclaimed, the fight would "settle the long-disputed question as to the superiority in the bantamweight class." *Montreal Herald*, August 5.

Panama Al Brown vs. Pete Sanstol—At Last!

On August 25, 1931, Panama Al Brown faced Pete Sanstol in what was billed as the first *bona fide* world championship bout ever held in Montreal, Canada. (The bout had been moved up a day from August 26 due to a scheduling conflict at the Forum.)

The two met in the Forum before 10,000 fans who had paid \$20,018, according to the *Montreal Herald*. (The *Calgary Daily Herald* claimed "12,300 fans paid \$27,400.") Before the fight Sanstol instructed his seconds to let him fight to the bitter end, no matter what. "The little Norwegian is determined to fight the fight of his life; there will be no towel thrown in the ring from his corner. 'If I'm beaten, I'll be carried out,' he said yesterday...." *The Gazette*, August 21, p. 15.

Sanstol's strategy was simple. Brown was too tall, his arms too long, and the gloves too spongy, to score a knockout. So his game plan was to get inside, crouch with his own head down and chin tucked tightly against his chest—to avoid Brown's darting left jabs, right crosses, and uppercuts—while he attacked and attacked the body to wear Brown down, and throwing the occasional uppercut to the chin or right cross to the head.

Earlier, in the August 19 *Montreal Herald*—under headlines that read *SANSTOL PLANS BODY ATTACK, Methods Of Old Timers For Sanstol; Will Try to Beat Al. Brown by Hammering at Body, Says Pete—Great Old-timers Did It*—a reporter recounted his conversation with

Sanstol at the Forum the previous Tuesday, concerning his June 24, 1930 bout with Domenico Bernasconi:

"You fellows are away off the track on that fight," said Sanstol, apropos the popular opinion held by a majority of the fight that Bernasconi, although a terrific puncher, was not so hot on the inside whips to the body.

"The Italian lad is a much better fighter than any but those who have been in the ring with him realize. In that fight he gave me one of the severest body poundings I have so far had to take. He could certainly hit hard, and kept chugging in those short arm jolts at close quarters.

"Those outside of the ring never realized how much punishment I was taking. Neither did the referee or the judges, for that matter. But I knew because I was taking it. Bernasconi could do a lot of things to a fellow that nobody seems to notice except the man he is boxing."

He would try to do the same to Panama Al Brown.

It was clear from the first round that Brown was seeking a knockout with that famous, lightning-quick right cross of his. But Sanstol turned away and it missed. But Sanstol wasn't able to get to Brown early on. By the third round the Norwegian was still "unable to fathom Brown's peculiar style of defence, trying every trick he knew to get in close enough to score with a telling punch." The Elongated Licorice Stick was booed in the fourth for punching in the clinches, while "evidently determined to bring the battle to a finish."

In the fifth Brown still "was finding difficulty in hitting Sanstol in his crouched position." In the seventh, "tactics were changed, Sanstol fighting from the defensive while Brown was carrying the battle." Sanstol scored with a hard right to the head. "The blow evidently hurt Brown and he fought like a demon in retaliation. Sanstol again landed to the head with a right cross and came into a clinch. Pete kept closing in, not allowing Brown to get in a clean punch."

Sanstol's game plan was working nicely.

In the eighth, because of his opponent's continuous crouching strategy, "Brown was chopping down on Sanstol's head with hammer-like lunges, the Norwegian keeping away from these blows." Then the Panamanian scored with a right cross that re-opened a cut under Sanstol's left eye from the Huat bout. Brown kept aiming at the injured eye, with Sanstol's face covered with blood.

The ninth saw Brown still “popping blows at the injured eye” and the Blonde Tiger now bleeding profusely. But “Sanstol showed marked ring generalship by avoiding the rights and ducking under the lefts.”



By the twelfth the boy from Moi, Norway had his opponent “bewildered.” Still keeping in under his taller’s opponent’s greater reach, Sanstol scored with a stiff right and left to the body as the bell sounded the end of the thirteenth round. “For this, he was given a great ovation.”

They had been traveling at a fast pace throughout the fight and were now beginning to show its effects in the latter championship rounds.

“Brown was making every effort to sneak over a knockout punch” in the fourteenth, “making every effort to send in a right or left that would terminate the bout.”

Each rushed from his corner in the final stanza. “Brown was desperate, swinging his left and rights like a flail, fighting as if the whole battle depended on the points gained in this round.... Both were fighting like demons, swinging and battling at every style they knew. The crowd was in an uproar.” *Montreal Gazette*.

“A great little fighter’ said the quiet, smooth-spoken negro. ‘I hit him hard quite a few times, as my hand shows. But a lot of times I hit at him, he just wasn’t there. He’s a fine boxer and a game fighter.’” *Montreal Herald*.

For years afterward the press labeled the decision for Brown “questionable.” (*Montreal Daily Herald* in articles leading up to Sanstol’s August 7, 1935, title bout with Sixto Escobar.) In an article announcing the September 17, 1932, *Pete Sanstol vs. Petey Hayes* bout at New York’s Ridgewood Grove, one reporter wrote, “He was outpointed by Al Brown in a bantamweight title match in Montreal, a much disputed decision, however. And wild horses could not drag Brown back into the ring with Sanstol.”

In the January 1959 issue of *The Ring*, p. 21, Ted Carroll said, “Brown was lucky to win. The consensus after the fight was that Sanstol, who put on a rousing finish in the fifteen round setto, had won six rounds to six for Brown with three even. However, most observers seemed to feel that the contest was too close for a title to change hands. By such a microscopic margin did Pete Sanstol miss the bantamweight championship of the world.”

LUMIANSKY PAYS TRIBUTE TO PETE SANSTOL'S FIGHT

Champion's Manager States Norwegian to Be Logical Contender for Title

By L.S.B. Shapiro

When Al Brown's arm was raised in victory last night at the Forum, it marked the culmination of one attempt by Pete Sanstol to gain the bantamweight crown of the world, but it also marked the beginning of another. For the blonde battler proved himself a stronger man against the famous negro than the most sanguine critic had expected, and he carved himself a neat niche as a logical contender for the title.

No better tribute was paid to Sanstol's showing than that emanating from the dressing room of the champion immediately after the fight. While Brown sat in a corner, talking Spanish and French gleefully to a number of admirers, David Lumiansky, his manager, was paying high tribute to the local fighter. "Sanstol has undoubtedly proven himself, not only the logical contender for the championship, but will probably also prove a persistent contender," was the way Lumiansky put it. "He made a great showing against Brown, and I might even say that it is gratifying that the fight went 15 rounds. I am certainly happy that the cut over his eye is not serious.

"Our stay in Montreal has certainly been pleasant, we have received fair play from all sides, and there is just one more thing to say, and that is, we can't get back here fast enough."

Thus before the crowd had left the Forum, the preliminary discussion for a return bout was already underway. Brown sails for Paris next week to meet Spider Pladner in October. If there is any doubt as to his ability to defeat Sanstol he is willing to agree to a return match, and negotiations may be completed in the near future.

The Gazette, August 26.

A return match would certainly have seemed in order. First of all, their fight had ended in a split-decision, as Dr. Gaston Demers thought Sanstol had won. Second, Sanstol would remain one of the top two contenders for quite some time to come. And third, according to the contract governing their bout, if Brown had lost the contest, Sanstol was mandated to grant *him* a return match.

But any rematch in the near future was out of the question. Sanstol had paid a terrible price during his bout with Brown. He had put everything he had into that fight for the undisputed world championship. As he told the press and supporters in his dressing room afterward, "I did my best." That cut below his left eye opened by Huat in their bout only the month before would open often in future bouts. There just had not been enough time since that bout for it to heal sufficiently. (Brown had over two months to heal from any injuries he may have sustained since his last fight June 15.) And a foot arch was damaged either for the first time during this bout, or the injury was exacerbated. Whatever the case, that would also haunt Sanstol for the remainder of his career. His planned three-month vacation from boxing to recharge his batteries would ultimately last much longer while he also healed from these injuries.

An Old Idol Returns

The newspaper headline read, *Pete Is Back, Ready To Fight*; the photo caption announced: "Here's Montreal's favorite boxer, whirlwind Pete Sanstol, the Norwegian blonde bullet, as he reached here Saturday.... He hopes to fight in Montreal soon, and is ready to meet any bantam."

Sanstol had returned to Montreal May 14, 1932—nine months after his split-decision world title loss to Panama Al Brown. He was embarking on his second comeback, and third campaign for that golden crown still adorned atop Brown's brow.

In the time since their August 25, 1931 fight, Al Brown had been keeping himself busy engaging in a dozen or more fights—including title defenses with Eugene Huat in Montreal and Kid Francis in France. He was back in Europe by May 1932—the exact time Sanstol had returned to North America to pursue him.

Although he had intended to recuperate from boxing for only three months after his bout with Brown, Sanstol ultimately was "out of the ring" for ten months. Yet, despite his inaction during this period, he was rated the third-best bantamweight in the world by the National Boxing Association—behind Brown and Dick Corbett. January 24, 1932, *Sacramento Union*.

Once he had returned to his Montreal boxing headquarters from Norway, Sanstol's first fight in his new campaign for the title was a June 13 victory over Jimmy Thomas at Toronto. He then went into training to meet Emile "Spider" Pladner, the former world's flyweight champion and the current bantamweight champion of Europe.

The Montreal press noted that Sanstol's style had changed since he was last seen in the ring. (Sanstol had been impressed by how Brown had conserved his energy during their fight, and how Brown had not wasted a single punch. Sanstol vowed to do the same from then onward. He also worked on improving his one and only deficit—his lack of a powerful knockout punch.)

One Montreal article described his new style:

Sanstol's snappy right cross, which was regarded as possessing no more than deadly accuracy and stinging effect last year, has been developed to a point where it packs dangerous possibilities. He has shortened his punch slightly, stiffening his ram at the point of contact, and the effect is crisp and jolting, proving far more solid and effective than the slashing lashes he displayed last year. And at that, Petey did not sacrifice any of his speed for the additional weapon, as any of those present at his workouts this week have noted and marveled that he is possibly even faster than ever—and that is going SOME!

Sanstol bounds around with all his old-time shiftiness and spectacular style and it is apparent that his aggressive qualities are more effective than ever, as he is planning two moves ahead all the time, pulling his opponent open by a feint and then plunging in with a rapid-fire series of left hooks and that new right-hand wallop only to slip away out of range again when his victim recovers his balance and bearings....

He looks contented and confident of success in his new campaign for the world's title....

The little Norwegian also seems to possess more ring generalship than ever and his fighting style strikes one as being more grim and business-like than before....

Lawson Bampton, *Montreal Herald*

On July 20, 1932, Sanstol met Pladner in the Montreal Forum:

Furnishing one of the most brilliant exhibitions of boxing that has been witnessed in Montreal in many years, Emile "Spider" Pladner and gallant little Pete Sanstol fought a ten-round draw before 7,000 enthusiastic spectators at the Forum last

by Ric Kilmer

night.... The decision announced from the centre of the ring was one of the fairest that has ever been given in Montreal and only the most rabid supporters of either fighter could have disagreed with it. Previous to the fight Pladner, on the result of his two matches with Bobby Leitham and the fact that Sanstol has not seen action in many months, was made the public choice.... In the opinion of critics who watched the encounter from ringside seats any other decision would have been unfair to either boxer, although in the early stages it looked as though Sanstol would run away with the bout.

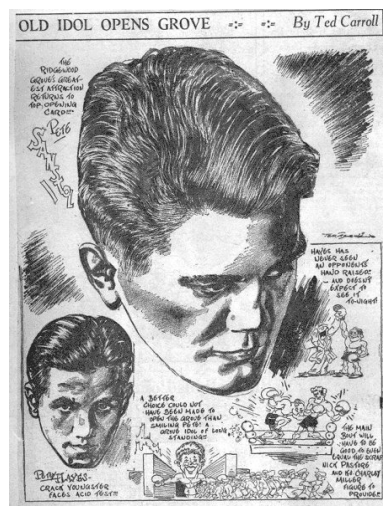
No two fighters could have entered a ring in better condition, notwithstanding reports that Sanstol had sprained a ligament in one of his legs. They fought at entirely different styles and each was pleasing to the spectator, furnishing brilliancy in every round that could hardly have been surpassed.

W. J. Morrison, *Montreal Daily Herald* (Fight Extra)?

During this fight, Sanstol once again displayed his well-known sportsmanship:

Pladner's smouldering temper nearly cost him the fight.... Seated at ring-side were a group of Sanstol's French supporters, and from the start they hurled barbed taunts at the Frenchman, in his own tongue. Perhaps it was derision in French accents that stung, but at any rate, Pladner was infuriated. He continually glanced at his tormentors, and in the third round stepping back from a clinch, he dropped his hands to his sides and stood glaring at them, his slaty eyes fairly blazing. With any fighter less sporting than Sanstol, that might have been an expensive gesture, for Sanstol could have stepped in and landed heavily. But he quietly waited until Pladner recovered his poise before renewing hostilities.

Two months later Sanstol was back at his old Brooklyn stomping grounds to face Petey Hayes. To commemorate this event, cartoonist and writer Ted Carroll created a piece entitled *Old Idol Opens Grove*. It included remarks such as "The Ridgewood Grove's Greatest Attraction Returns to Top Opening Card" and "A Better Choice Could Not Have Been Made to Open the Grove Than Smiling Pete: A



Grove Idol of Long Standing."

Carroll later described Sanstol as "one of the hottest local favorites the big town New York ever had. Pete, flashy, colorful and capable, fought in the Ridgewood Grove Club in the Queens section of New York no less than 26 times in one year, packing the place every time."

"The Golden Bantams," *The Ring*, Dec. 1953, p. 13.

Sanstol beat Hayes, then drew with Eddie Bowling five days later. Then he was back at Montreal for that long-awaited rematch with Eugene Huat, where he was invited by the Imperial Broadcasting Company to transmit a message to his fans. "Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am pleased to have this opportunity of saying a few words to you on the eve of my fight with Eugene Huat at the Forum tomorrow night. I can only say that I am in good condition and feel confident that I will win and get a chance to meet Panama Al Brown for the Bantamweight Championship of the World. Thank you, Miss Dow. Good-night."

When Sanstol headed to the ring—perhaps thinking to himself that he needed to convincingly put to rest any doubt in the minds of all who saw his first fight with the red-headed Frenchman—he noticed that Huat was wearing the same color trunks that *he* was wearing. He rushed back to his dressing room, put on a different colored pair and, according to one article, "bounced down the steps with one leap and from there to the hardwood floor... Hugo Quist's leg treatment certainly proved itself."

A sports reporter shares the following eye-witness account. "Never in the history of his many spectacular fights in Montreal rings did Sanstol give a more dazzling exhibition of straight boxing skill, amazing precision of distance in gauging his opponent's blows, and of lightning returns." He had Huat "plainly bewildered."

At one point "Huat swung so hard and missed completely that he spun right around in his tracks, upon which Sanstol shot a left with deadly speed to the head.... To use an old bromide of the ring, he gave Huat a boxing lesson."

In the seventh round Sanstol "was dancing back, hands down, when Huat suddenly plunged forward and lashed out with both hands and down went the blonde. He scrambled up without a count but the wallop from the hardest puncher in bantam ranks plainly weakened him, and he was tired and bleeding freely at the end of the session." (Sanstol would write many years later: "It will always be a source of pride to me that I was never knocked down for a count, and for that reason there is no picture of me 'taking it lying down.'")

SANSTOL SHOWS FINE BOXING DISPLAY

Pete Sanstol was the old Blonde Dynamo last night—the best bantamweight in the world, possibly barring gangling Al. Brown, who isn't so much a fighter as he is a physical freak. Coming back to the ring wars under a cloud of doubt as to physical condition and stamina, the Norwegian perpetual motion machine stands out in the clear sunlight today. Blazing through a dramatic ten rounds, he gave a dazzling exhibition of speed and flawless boxing skill to set at nought the terrific punching power and endless aggression of grim-faced Eugene Huat of France.

Only once did Sanstol seem to falter—that in the seventh round when Huat, plunging in, head down, fists flying, whipped a smashing hook that landed on Sanstol's mouth, split his upper lip right through and dropped him sharply on his haunches for the only knockdown of the fight. Pete was caught off-balance by the blow.... "It was a left he hit me with," said Sanstol, between swollen lips in his dressing-room right after. "It caught me high. If it had been flush it would have been just too bad."

From the seventh on, Sanstol fought with blood gushing down his chin, but he fought magnificently. Though weakened by the blow, he still retained his boxing skill, and holding Huat even in the eighth as the frowning little Frenchman made his most desperate drive of the fight, Sanstol boxed so perfectly in the ninth that he took the round, and held Huat even in a furiously-fought final three minutes.... Sanstol, grim-mouthed, bleeding, was ready for no retreating battle and throughout they battled viciously, with nothing between them as both battered away. But Sanstol, in superb form, rallied in the ninth, took the round on points and the tenth

was a bitterly-fought toss-up, an even break. Huat was twice warned for heeling in the tenth, but on the whole it was not only a great, but cleanly-fought, match; one of the most spectacular ever seen at the Forum.

Sanstol As Good As He Ever Was—Or Better

Sanstol looked great. He shared in his come-back triumph, for his status was a bit beclouded after the weak fashion in which he finished against Pladner. Undoubtedly as good as ever and, in the opinion of many critics, he is even better. His slipping of punches by hair-breadth fractions, his feinting, and his speed of fist and foot were equal to anything he ever showed in a Montreal ring. Definitely, too, this fight proved that Sanstol's right foot has been completely cured....

Above two articles from the *Montreal Daily Herald*, October 26, 1932.

Leitham-Sanstol Fight Looms as "Natural"

A Sanstol-Leitham fight is now the talk of cauliflower circles, and may materialize. Leitham is off to Winnipeg shortly to defend his [Canadian] bantam title against [Frankie] Wolfram, the new western sensation, and if he comes through that bout successfully, will be in line for a Sanstol match. Sanstol is one of the few who has beaten Leitham, but that was well over a year ago and the Verdun Flash has improved vastly since then and is now a high-ranking bantam, one of the best in the entire division. Leitham and Sanstol would be a stand-out fight....

A [Pete] DeGrasse-Sanstol fight is another that the fans are talking about. Here are two really brilliant fighters, and a clash between them would be an epic of ringdom here, with blinding speed and skill in complete control.

"The Sock Exchange," E. W. Ferguson, *Montreal Daily Herald*.

The papers reminded their readers that Sanstol was "outranked in the bantamweight class only by the champion himself, Panama Al Brown." "The National Boxing Association, whose ratings in the past often have

been about as reliable as Ananias, hasn't erred in ranking Sanstol number 2 among the world bantamweights and it required a Sanstol to interrupt the winning habits of [Benny] Schwartz last night." (Ananias is a Biblical reference to a liar who dropped dead when Peter challenged him to confess the truth.)

On January 10, 1933, Sanstol was scheduled to fight Philadelphia's Jimmy Mack at Alexandria, Virginia. Reporter Bob McCormick:

Two boys with but a single thought will meet in the ring at Portner's tonight. They are Pete Sanstol, generally regarded the world's second best bantamweight, and Jimmy Mack. Their common idea concerns a bout with Al Brown, the world's bantam champion. Sanstol has already fought Brown. And, he says, he learned one specific thing that he believes will help him when they meet again. It was ring generalship.

Sprawled upon his hotel-room bed last night, Pete told of his first bout with Brown. And strangely enough, he blamed his defeat not upon the fact that the champion is 5-feet-11 and has tremendously long arms, but upon the fact that he is an extremely wise fighter.

"Not once," said Sanstol, "did Brown get himself in a hole. And not once did he waste a blow or the least little drop of energy. I've been practicing and when I fight him again I'll be the same way. Things may happen."

Around this time—late 1932 or early 1933—Sanstol had met up once again with his friend, former flyweight world champion Fidel LaBarba. LaBarba's manager was the well-respected George V. Blake, whom Sanstol desired as *his* manager. LaBarba and Sanstol had sparred and trained together for three weeks back in 1929, in Paris. "They became friends—almost chums. The serious of Sanstol and his vein of Scandinavian humor attracted Fidel. It interested Blake. Sanstol studied the two Americans. He asked Blake to manage him." But Blake refused, as he would take on no other boxer while LaBarba was active. April 9 Sunday Morning *Los Angeles Times*.

Now, four years later, they were once again training together, including doing road-work in New York's Central Park. Sanstol hoped Blake would take him on now. "He asked Fidel about it as they ran along the winding paths. La Barba said he would ask Mr. Blake about it and try to win him over. Seaman Watson defeated Fidel and he

announced his retirement before he knew his eyes had been injured." *Id.*



Sanstol, Primo Camera, Fidel LaBarba

"I told LaBarba that I knew Blake would not have anything to do with a fighter who wasn't clean and honest and that I had set that as my ideal ever since I met him in Paris. I know Blake inquired into my habits, checked up everything I had done—my fights in M o n t r e a l a n d elsewhere—before he

gave his answer. It was the happiest day of my life when he signed me to a contract. I rushed out and cabled my mother and father in Oslo of the great news—that I was being managed by the biggest figure and the best-liked man in all America." *The Knockout* magazine (Los Angeles), April 1, 1933.

His current manager Raoul Godbout graciously allowed Sanstol out of their contract. Sanstol, LaBarba, and Blake then left New York and traveled together across the country to southern California—where, by March 1933, Los Angeles had become Sanstol's new headquarters.

During his early days in Los Angeles, Sanstol made the cover of the April 1 *The Knockout* with Blake and an impression on the local media. And, for his American West Coast debut, Sanstol made a fool out of Georgie Hansford. According to Los Angeles columnist Chas. M'Donald:

If Georgie Hansford has a sense of humor he's still probably laughing at himself today. His bout...was just that funny. Hansford missed so many punches and by such wide margins as the clever Sanstol weaved, bobbed and side-stepped, that the battle looked more like an act than a contest of fisticuffs.... In fact at times it looked like Hansford was shadow boxing with a common ordinary house fly. Sanstal [*sic*] proved to be just that fast and clever. At the end of the eighth round he had George so dizzy from missing that the local youngster insisted on going to the wrong corner as the gong ended the round.



By early 1932, the year previous, Young Tommy had been considered the fifth best bantam in the world by the NBA—behind Al Brown, Dick Corbett, Sanstol, and Newsboy Brown. On April 11, 1933, Sanstol met Tommy in the Olympic Auditorium and was soundly beaten by the Filipino. "Only a stout hearted Norwegian would have kept tearing in like Sanstol... Sanstol's only attribute, and it kept the gallery gods stringing along with him, was his gameness." Los Angeles Sports

Reporter Sol Plex.

The Norseman might have mentioned to the press that his poor performance was largely due to a serious sinus problem he had developed from the California climate. But he made no excuses. Still, he was so unaccustomed to this kind of weather that he was forced to seek medical help.

On May 4 Sanstol wrote in his journal:

I have just returned from a visit to Dr. J. J. O'Brien. What the doctor told me in half an hour was more than I have been able to find out regarding my condition... A boxer's life is short. He is concentrated energy, and this energy is released every time he has a match. While he is young, he is able to regain his energy quicker than when he gets older... Year by year one uses up the reserves of energy that nature has given you.... In my case it is correct. I have always put pride in being fit all the time.... I have now tried to put some weight on, and as soon as I am on my feet again, I will go forward again, but this time with a very costly achieved experience [*i.e.*, his fourth loss in 97 professional bouts]....

There is a wish behind my actions [winning the title], and if it is up to me, I will from this day do what I can to make it come true. Everybody is forgotten; only the Champions remain on the list. So do your duty, Sanstol. Forget your knowledge and philosophy until you are finished with your work. I feel a certain relief in writing this. The result of my striving shall—win or lose—explain that I did try my best.... The word SINUS-TROUBLE will for a long time stand as an evil dream. What this has led

me through is more than words can explain. Only to get out of bed and feel like a drunken alcoholic, is more than enough to give a young, life-loving boy a bad mood.

Sanstol had been fascinated with yoga and philosophy for the longest time. He also had some interest in religion and the supernatural. He had a spiritual mentor in a Norwegian gypsy named Marcello Haugen, who was said to have supernatural gifts. Haugen could “see”through Sanstol’s body to determine what critical places needed massaging.

In time Sanstol recovered enough from his sinus troubles to travel with George Blake by car for some bouts in Northern California. He managed to have only two fights—drawing with Speedy Dado and defeating Clever Sison—when he received an offer from Paris that changed everything: an offer from Panama Al Brown to fight again for the Bantamweight Championship of the World!

Next Issue:

Settling the Score

**The Rivalry Between Panama Al Brown & Pete Sanstol
(Part II of II)**

Ric Kilmer is an IBRO member and a BoxRec.com Editor. The beginning of this article borrows from his “History of the Vacant Bantamweight Title,” *IBRO Journal* #87, p. 47.

© 2006 Ric Kilmer, All Rights Reserved