

## Willie Pep Vs. Jackie Graves

By Jake Wegner

Jackie Graves went on to have a stellar professional career, competing in the most talent-rich Featherweight era of all time, compiling a respectable 82-11-2 (48) record. He met the great Willie Pep in a non-title bout in 1946, twice knocking down the Featherweight King before succumbing to the Wisp's assault, via TKO in the 8th. This was the legendary fight in which Pep allegedly won the third round without throwing a single punch. And until now, 99% of the boxing community has believed it. Including yours truly. But right after doing the Graves interview, I did something no one else has done up to this point...I read the newspaper's round-by-round fight description by Joe Hennessy of the St. Paul Pioneer Press from the day after the fight (7-26-46). And guess what? Not only is there no mention at all in the entire sports section about the famous feat in the third round, but the exact opposite seems to have occurred. According to Hennessy, who sat ringside to report on the fight, this is what happened in the third round. "Graves pounded a left to the stomach that made Pep wince in the third. They mixed wildly. A clicker couldn't count the blows. Pep punched Jack into the ropes as the most even round of the evening ended". Not only is there no mention that Pep didn't throw a punch, there is also no mention of defensive wizardry, no feints, no slips, no hiding behind the referee, no nothing!

In fact, Hennessy says that this was one of most fiercely fought rounds of the fight. "A clicker could not count the blows", he said. And he specifically makes mention that it was Pep who, "punched Jack into the ropes as the most even round of the evening ended." Still don't believe it? I thought some may not. So I have provided below a scanned microfilm of the round by round by Hennessy. What makes this more interesting though, is the fact that the Pioneer Press is the newspaper that the well-known sports writer, Don Riley wrote for. Don Riley is the one most commonly credited for saying that Pep told him before the fight that he would not throw a punch in the third. But yet, no mention of a punchless Pep in the third round even by Riley himself. Pep himself after the fight says in Riley's small piece on the fight that it took in four rounds to figure out Graves' style.

Referee Johnny Sokol gave the instructions and they were followed to the letter. Pep began a little on the cautious side, driving Graves into the corner with sharp but short rights and lefts. It was the champion's round, but by no great margin. Jackie stung Pep with his noted left in the second, coming out fast at the bell. It was the sort of a round that left fans hoarse. Pep drove in a right, Jackie shot a left. Give and take. It was close.

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Pep showed he had a left as well as a right in the fourth. They mixed it fiercely in an-

other great round. It was Pep's by a small margin.

In the fifth Willie forced Graves to back pedal. They wrestled to the floor as all caution was thrown away. Pep was beginning to show the form that would win.

It took the sixth round to prove Pep was a great champion and Graves a fully game challenger. In all Jackie went down six times for counts of from two to nine. The bell had hardly sounded when Jackie was on the floor for a five count from Pep's right. Then for nine from another right.

Willie was measuring his blows. Jack went down for nine again. He was groggy and staggered as he rose to his feet. Pep slipped to the floor came back to rifle a left what most thought would put Graves out.