Lamotta, Jake (1922-) Encyclopedia Article

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In the boxing community, Jake LaMotta (born Giacobe LaMotta) is best known for his six-fight series with the man widely recognized as the greatest fighter in the history of boxing, Sugar Ray Robinson. LaMotta handed Robinson his first professional loss on February 26, 1943, and although Robinson won their other five fights, several were closely contested. Outside the boxing community, LaMotta is best known for the Academy Award-winning film about his life, *Raging Bull* (1980). The film focused on LaMotta's stormy personal life, especially his abusive relationship with his second wife, Vicky.

Jake LaMotta (left) swaps punches with Marcel Cerdan.

LaMotta fought against mob control of his career throughout the 1940s and early 1950s. A middleweight contender by the early 1940s, LaMotta refused to "fix," that is, to purposely lose a fight so that organized crime elements in boxing could make money betting on the fight's outcome. As a result of his refusal to cooperate with the mob which controlled boxing, LaMotta was denied an opportunity to fight for the middleweight title for the better part of his career. By 1947, frustrated with his failure to secure a title shot, LaMotta finally agreed to lose intentionally to contender Billy Fox in exchange for an opportunity to become middleweight champion of the world. LaMotta made good on the opportunity with a 10th round technical knockout of world champion Marcel Cerdan.

Further Reading:

LaMotta, Jake. *Raging Bull: My Story.* New York, De Capo Press, 1997.