

Daren Zenner



Mentions in the newspapers

Zenner leaves Lakusta

By ANGE D'AGUI
Herald-Tribune staff

Less than a month ago, fifteen-year-old Bezanson welterweight Daren Zenner appeared to have things pretty well going his way.

Touted as a fine boxing prospect, Zenner was to accompany his ex-coach, former Canadian heavyweight champion Ken Lakusta, first to Los Angeles, then to San Juan, Puerto Rico. Lakusta will step into the ring against former Canadian and World Boxing Council heavyweight champ Trevor Berbick in San Juan on May 1.

Today, however, while Lakusta trains in Los Angeles' Hoover Street Gym, Zenner finds himself out in the cold in Edmonton, still waiting for his elusive first sanctioned fight.

"We're still friends, but it just didn't work out," said Zenner of his decision to forego the planned southern excursion with Lakusta.

"He invited me down there . . . he wanted me to go pretty bad. But he has his own career to think about, he shouldn't have to worry about two (careers) right now.

"He was teaching me some stuff, but it wasn't basic," said Zenner, who heeded the advice of several acquaintances and returned to trainer Ray Cut-

ler's corner. Zenner was under Cutler's tutelage prior to his brief stint with Lakusta.

Zenner rejoined Cutler with the intention of training for the junior provincial championships held last weekend in Edmonton. However, Cutler managed to withhold Zenner from stepping into the ring against that calibre of boxers until he was better prepared.

"In all honesty, I didn't think Daren was ready," said Cutler, explaining Zenner, who only resumed training two weeks ago, isn't in top physical condition.

Cutler said Zenner will train throughout the summer, then get his feet wet by engaging in a "couple of easy fights" next fall.

"We're going to do it right."

While sparring at the Cougar Boxing Gym against Stan Cunningham, a welterweight whom Cutler said has four professional fights to his credit, Zenner caught the eye of club-coach Paul Hordie.

"Quite frankly, I think the kid's talented . . . and I should know, I've seen enough of them," said Hordie, a boxing coach for 34 years, who's currently coaching Edmonton's Scott Olson, last year's Commonwealth light-flyweight gold medallist.



DAREN ZENNER
... still waiting

"I feel qualified to say the boy has much more than just a little talent," added Hordie, a Canadian national team coach who also aided Edmonton's Kelly Perlette to a light-middleweight Commonwealth gold medal in 1978.

Hordie, who feels Zenner should already have had at least two fights to his credit at this stage in his boxing career, said the youngster "has the talent to go some place," if he gets a good trainer who ensures proper training and sparring.

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Daren Zenner gets Texas edge

By DAN SCHNICK
Herald-Tribune staff

The Standing Eight Boxing Club in Dallas, Texas is an unlikely place for a Bezanson kid. In fact, it's an unlikely place for a white kid!

Daren Zenner is the only white boxer of roughly 30 blacks and Hispanics in the renowned club and is certainly the only puncher from Canada, but he feels right at home.

The 17-year-old pugilist made the move to Texas on May 25 to gain an edge in his burgeoning boxing career. Already the decision has paid off.

"I've learned more in the time I've been here than in all the years I've been boxing," Zenner said in a telephone conversation from his Dallas residence last night. "I had a problem with heat dehydration but I'm over that and the training is going really good."

Zenner's progress is due in large part to his trainer, former World Welterweight (147 lb.) Champion Curtis Cokes.

"He's really good. He's got me settling down on my punches — they're more crisp, with more power. I'm working on my style: jab, step in and punch and dance."

What is likely his biggest learning aid is that every boxer in the gym is dedicated and, most importantly, hungry.

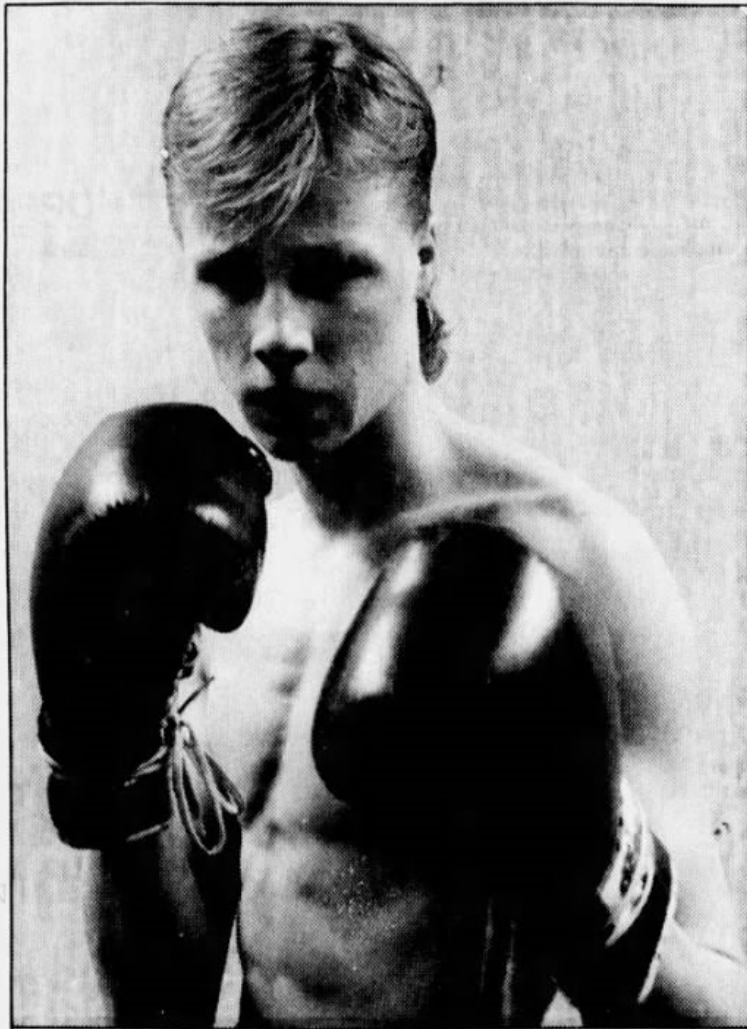
"You can beat on these guys but they just keep coming back," exclaimed Zenner. "The first thing you learn is that if you hit a guy hard you finish him. You have to take what you learn here into the ring — you can't slack off. If you get tagged you'll get finished."

Another thing he has found is the misconception of the poor boxer being the hungriest.

"The poor kid who uses boxing to get out is a stereotype. Everybody pays the fee (\$200/month club membership) and most aren't that poor. Everybody here loves boxing, that's why they're hungry. You don't have any problems finding someone to spar with — a light-weight will spar with you. And even then, you're going to get a fight. There are some real tough boys here."

Being a distinct minority is the opposite of what he is used to but the situation doesn't present a problem.

"When I walked into the gym the first day everyone stopped what they



DAREN ZENNER

were doing and just stared," recalled Zenner with a laugh. "But everything is okay now — they call me 'Little Brother'."

'Little' is hardly the right term to describe Zenner. In the last two months he has rocketed from 6'1" to 6'3". His weight has varied little; 161 lb., five over the middleweight limit, his ideal fighting mass.

"I'm trying to get ready for the Canadian Intermediate title next February. I'll get down to 156 no problem."

It's hard to believe that with his exercise regime he can lose five pounds. Zenner gets up every morning at 5:00 a.m. and runs six miles; works out with weights from 10:00 a.m. to 11; then hits the gym with Cokes working him from 1:00 p.m. until 4:30.

"I'll probably stay down here for six months," he predicts. "I'm going to learn some tricks of the trade with Curtis then try to get a fight in Grande Prairie in the fall. I want everyone up there to know what I'm up to."

The Standing Eight will be Zenner's training headquarters for the next three years with Cokes staying on as his trainer. His long-term goal is the 1992 Olympics and after that a professional career.

"Eventually I want to grow into a cruiserweight. I think for my height that would be about right."

But right now it's hard and dedicated training — and Zenner has no problems with that.

"I love training. I'm proving myself right now but I want to be the best. This is the way you find out if you can be the best."



DAREN ZENNER

Look out Texas! here comes Daren

*Young local fighter is in tough
against experienced opponents*

By TODD MAXWELL
Herald-Tribune staff

Daren Zenner will climb into a boxing ring in Arlington, Texas tonight to begin a tournament in which he's not supposed to beat anybody — on paper that is.

The 17-year-old Grande Prairie-born, Bezanson-raised puncher won the right to represent Dallas at the prestigious, annual amateur tournament by thrashing a clubmate at Pike's Park on back-to-back days over a month ago.

Now the 6-foot-3, 156-pound junior middleweight faces the toughest challenge of his young career.

In spite of the fact that Zenner is technically still in the novice class with only seven fights under his belt, the tournament has placed him in the open class, primarily because he defeated a veteran of 35 fights in earning his berth into the tourney.

Tonight, Zenner will face Fred Rayes of Sweetwater, Texas, a veteran of 42 fights, in opening-round action.

Rayes, 32-10 in the ring, is a Mexican-American fighter who Zenner expects to live up to the reputation that other fighters of that nationality have established — TOUGH!

"You have to hit them with the sink, and the couch... and they still get back

up. It's kind of frustrating," says Zenner. "They don't care how bad they look afterwards."

If Zenner gets past Rayes, (pronounced ray-ess) he will meet Gerald Grant tomorrow afternoon for gold in the junior middleweight division.

Grant, who got the bye, should be more trouble than Rayes ever thought of being.

The Houston fighter packs an impressive 80-16 record into the tournament, and although he's not on the U.S. Olympic team, he is known as one of the top amateurs in Texas.

"He's won pretty well every amateur tournament around, and I'm not supposed to beat this guy."

But Zenner, who is trained by former undisputed welterweight champion of the world Curtis Cokes, feels ready and would relish the opportunity to climb through the ropes and challenge Grant.

"I've been training hard for the last month and a half," adds Zenner by telephone from Dallas. "I've been running seven miles a day, training for four hours, and going 15 rounds a day on the heavy bag. And, I've been doing a lot of sparring."

Cokes is also betting on Zenner, the only white fighter in his stable of over 100 pugilists.

"Curtis feels confident with me. He feels I have better physical abilities, I'm smarter, and I hit harder. But these guys have been around. So if I lose, it would be their experience that did it for them."

Although Zenner has no concrete plans at this point, he says he would like to return to Canada next month and prepare for, and take a shot at, the Canadian championship in February.



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Zenner too much for Texas

**Local fighter strikes
gold at Arlington
with a pair of KO's**

By TODD MAXWELL
Herald-Tribune staff

Onlookers were betting on experience, and against unproven potential — but most onlookers were surprised!

It took less than three rounds for Bezanson's Daren Zenner to dispose of TWO opponents on the weekend, earning him gold at an annual amateur boxing tournament at the Boy's Club in Arlington, Texas, a suburb of Dallas.

Zenner won the right to take on Houston's Gerald Grant for the gold medal Saturday by first defeating Sweetwater, Texas native Fred Rayes Friday night.

Zenner, now 8-1, stopped Rayes, 32-11, by knocking him out in the second round.

"It was a real good fight, he was tough," said Zenner of the Mexican-American opponent. "He lost, but I had a lot respect for him."

That win pitted Zenner against Grant, a veteran of 96 fights with an 80-16 record, for all the marbles in the junior middleweight division (156 pounds) Saturday afternoon.

The result was a stunning first-round knockout victory for Zenner over his heavily favored opponent.

Zenner scored the knockout with a right hook, but credits the strategy to his trainer Curtis Cokes, who shouted pointers from ringside.

"Me and Curtis have been working on this punch for guys who rush in on you," explained Zenner. "You pivot on your right foot and you step back, and when you pivot, you throw the right hook."

"When I fought Grant he kept rushing in on me, and I heard Curtis yelling from the corner, pivot, pivot. So I did it, and I caught him with the right hook. It was something really good and he just went down. I caught him, and that was it."

"If Curtis hadn't been in my corner, it would've been a lot longer fight. A good cornerman like Curtis picks up on what the other guy is doing. I heard him yelling from the corner and the next time the guy rushed in on me, I caught him with the shot."

The upset stunned the fans and experts alike.

"Nobody expected it, the whole crowd was quiet when it happened. Sort of like, what's this white boy doing?"

"I look at this gold medal, but it hasn't really sunk in yet," added the 17-year-old, Grande Prairie-born fighter.

The fact that the fights ended before they could be a learning experience for the 6-foot-3 puncher was not a problem.

"The thing is, I've improved 200 percent since I've come down here and started working with Curtis. So I didn't go into the fights with the attitude that I wanted to learn from them, I went in there with the attitude that I was going to take them out."

Cokes, who was the undisputed world welterweight champ for three years in the late sixties, vouched that Zenner is for real.

"He's looking real good. I'm real proud of him. He went through these two fights with no problem at all," said Cokes by telephone from Dallas last night. "I'm going to miss him when he leaves. He's the champ of the gym right now."

Cokes, who works with approximately 150 fighters at any given time as owner of Pike's Park in Dallas, wasn't



DAREN ZENNER WITH TRAINER CURTIS COKE

worried that Zenner was moving up too fast by taking on the veteran fighters this weekend. The knockouts (both fighters were down for the count) vindicated his beliefs.

"These kids (Rayes and Grant) have a lot of experience, but we teach our guys in the gym that that doesn't make any difference. This kid (Zenner) has got a lot of ability too, and all we have to do is get it out of him."

The progress that Zenner has made to this point prompted Cokes to make a bold prediction.

"Shoot, by the time he's 22 or 23 years old, he's going to be world champion. He punches like a professional fighter right now. He's got that good left hook, good right hand, long reach and a good jab. That's almost unbeatable. These kids down here just

can't take that type of banging."

But Cokes feels he will go a long ways in the fight game for more reasons than just having the physical tools.

"He's got a good attitude, and I think that's the key. When he turns pro, he could be a good fighter with a little pushing, because we pushed him to the limit, and he responded."

Zenner plans to return to Grande Prairie early next month, and a Canadian championship is his next target.

"I think this win means I'm ready for anybody in Canada," added Zenner. "I want to win that Canadian title in February."

One thing is certain, Zenner left his mark on the Lone Star state.

"The kid has definitely turned a lot of heads down here," summed Cokes.

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Zenner growing up fast

By TODD MAXWELL
Herald-Tribune staff

Daren Zenner is learning lots about boxing, and life.

The Grande Prairie-born middleweight who made the decision to turn professional last month, plans to go through the formality of making the official announcement at a press conference Dec. 2nd, says manager Stan Miller.

Miller also says that two dates are in mind for Zenner's professional debut – Jan. 19th or the 26th – and, the Edmonton location has been narrowed to either the Convention Centre or the Agricom. The opponent will also come from a list that has been narrowed to three possible candidates – all reportedly tough, worthy opponents.

Zenner will be based out of Edmonton, and is currently training at the Panther Gym. Trainer Curtis Cokes, former world welterweight champion, will accompany Zenner to Grande Prairie early in December.

Zenner's return to Alberta from Pike's Park in Dallas, Texas, where he was training under the tutelage of Cokes, was prompted in part by war wounds.

Zenner, 18, suffered a hairline fracture to his jaw, a broken nose and some loosened teeth due to an accumulation of punches from clubmate Johnny Johnson following three straight weeks of sparring at Pike's Park in Dallas, where the two were training.

"I've wanted to spar with Johnny for a long time, and I finally got him – for three weeks straight," said Zenner by telephone from Edmonton. "After each day my nose was so puffy I could hardly breathe through it, but that's the price

you pay to learn."

Cokes pitted the two fighters against one another for the sessions believing Zenner was ready for the more experienced Johnson.

Zenner claims that Johnson – a best friend out of the ring – uses worn out gloves in sparring sessions, and their lack of padding makes it that much worse to be on the receiving end.

In spite of a rowdy and somewhat rambunctious reputation for being a veteran of as many fights outside of the ring as in, Miller claims Zenner – who has recently taken professional therapy to help curb his aggression – is undergoing a lot of maturation and he feels the pugilist is ready for the professional fight game.

"He's growing up a lot," says Miller. "He's 18 now, and I believe he's very serious, and very committed. We know he's got all the talent in the world, and we know he's in great shape." N



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Proposed fight card looking to clear hurdles



DAREN ZENNER

By KEVIN PILLING
Herald-Tribune staff

Preparations for a proposed Jan. 24 professional boxing card in Grande Prairie's Johnny Macdonald Arena featuring the debut of hometown hopeful Daren Zenner are underway on two fronts.

A proposal to have liquor available for the card which headlines a battle between Texas welterweight Anthony "Two Guns" Williams and an as-yet unidentified fighter, will go before city council next Monday.

"It's a matter of that we have to get a bylaw in place approving the Johnny Mac to sell liquor," says George Keen of community services. "We've already allowed liquor into the facilities on a special-permit basis."

Keen says special permits are only available to members of the Leisure Centre which houses the Johnny Macdonald Arena. The boxing card is a different ball of wax, hence the need to run it before council.

"This, because of the nature of the crowd - anybody who buys a ticket - then there has to be a bylaw in place allowing that," Keen says.

"It's just a procedure that we haven't had the opportunity to do before and this presents the opportunity."

Keen added that the proposal to allow liquor sales at the Johnny Macdonald might not come through.

"It's not for certain," Keen says. "The promoter is desirous of having the city apply for a liquor permit to allow for the sale of beer and wine during the event."

Ken Kozak, chairman of the Edmonton Boxing and Wrestling Commission, says the card is also going to be reviewed later this week. The card, which features three professional bouts including Zenner's professional debut against American middleweight Gord Vitvaker, will be addressed later this week.

"We'll be having a meeting this week with our commission to formally approve which has not taken place as yet," says Kozak, who is also an alderman in Edmonton.

Kozak says the details of the card, which plans to include five amateur bouts in addition to the three pro scraps, will be made available in time for the meeting of the EBWC.

"We as a commission would be sanctioning it as well as supervising it if it does go ahead."

The professional referees and judges would all come out of the EBWC if the card happens, Kozak adds.

"If the conditions can all be met from our perspective as far as adhering to the rules and regulations and if everything else is complied with, then there's no reason why we should refuse it."

The professional fighters must be deemed by the EBWC to be fit and not under suspension before the card will be sanctioned.

Zenner won't have to meet any special requirements because it is his first professional fight.

"As long as all participants, whether it's their first fight or otherwise, are declared medically fit, then there's no reason the card can't go ahead."

Kozak says the EBWC will meet and decide whether or not to sanction the card by no later than the end of this week.

Besides the three professional bouts, the five amateur fights on the card will be made up in part by local boxers. Dan Higgins, coach of the Grande Prairie Boxing Club, is in charge of setting up those fights.

The Edmonton promoters for the card will be in Grande Prairie later this week to announce more details concerning the event.

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Daren Zenner camp wants tough opponents starting from Day 1.

By KEVIN PILLING
Herald-Tribune staff

It's all business in the Daren Zenner camp now that the local boxer has arrived in Grande Prairie to train in earnest for his professional boxing debut on Jan. 24.

The 18-year-old, up-and-comer rolled into the Swan City on Friday, accompanied by his manager Stan Miller and trainer Curtis Cokes. Zenner and Cokes will be conducting daily public workouts at 1 p.m. in the Renford Inn. As the fight nears, other boxers on the card will be coming to the city and joining in at the workouts.

Cokes, undisputed welterweight champion of the world from 1966-69, fought professionally 114 times. He's been training fighters since 1974. In addition to Zenner, Cokes also trains Anthony "Two Guns" Williams who will be fighting Brian Davenport in the card's 10-round main event.

At a press conference Friday afternoon, Zenner's camp also released some additional information about the card to be held in the Johnny Macdonald Arena.

Zenner was scheduled to fight a boxer named Gord Whittaker in his debut but that has been changed. Replacing Whittaker on the card is a scrapper from Dallas-Fort Worth named Sugar Ray Haines who'll battle Zenner for six rounds. With a 6-5 record as a professional, Haines figures to be pretty stiff competition for Zenner to be up against in his first pro fight.

But that's the way Cokes wants it.

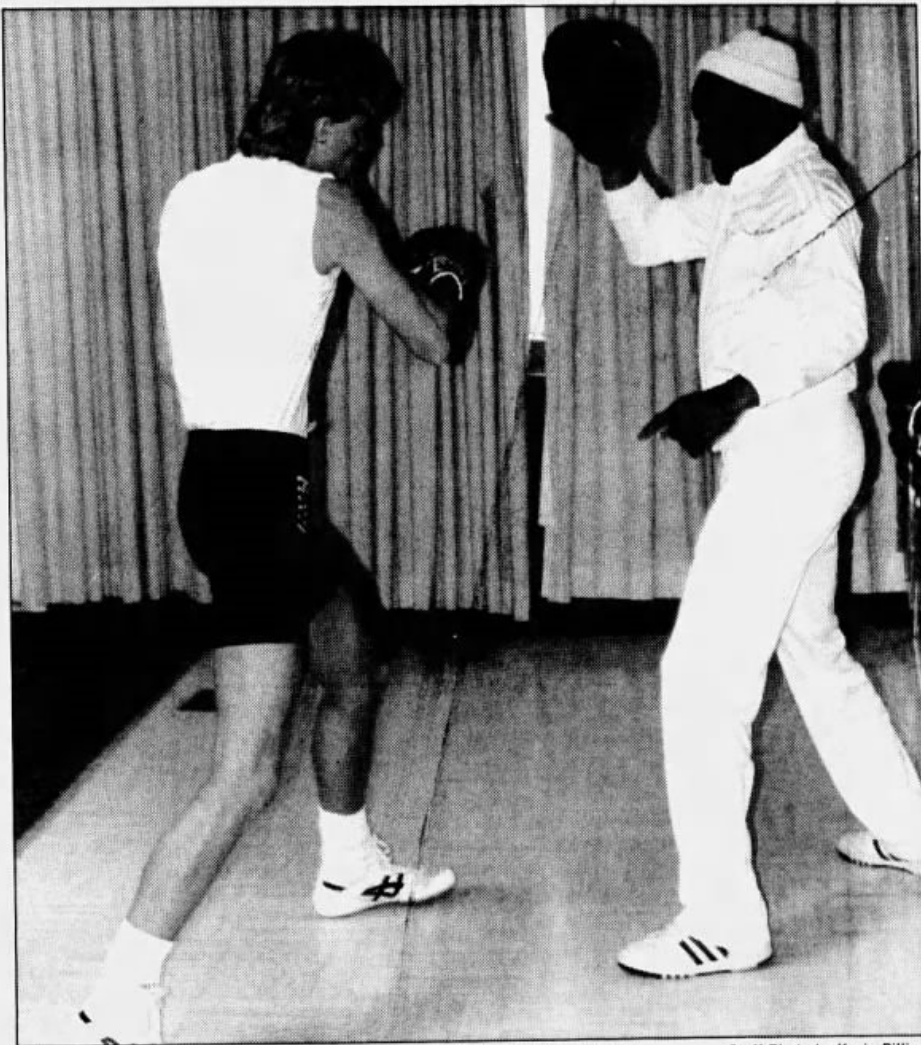
"A lot of times people come to misunderstand that because a kid is a white boxer he can't fight," Cokes said in his southern drawl. "Like the Gerry Cooney's, they always get built up by fighting a bunch of stiff.

"Well, I can assure you this won't happen with Daren. We're not going to bring in a bunch of guys to fall down for him because I won't be a part of that. I didn't do that when I was fighting and Daren doesn't want to do that either."

Despite nearly as many losses as wins, Cokes doesn't figure Haines to be an easy mark for Zenner. Cokes said he doesn't place too much weight on a fighter's record. "I'd like to erase that 15-0 stuff," Cokes said. "It doesn't really make good sense to me. The TV people like that. They can put you on the television and say your 20-0, your undefeated and make it sell."

"But you could have defeated who? Twenty grandmas, so that doesn't mean too much."

Besides the Williams-Davenport, 10-round main event and Zenner's six-round war with Haines, one other professional bout will be held. Zenner's manager said the com-



Daren Zenner works out by chasing targets set by trainer Curtis Cokes.

Staff Photo by Kevin Pilling

batants aren't finalized as yet but he expects it to be a heavyweight affair.

Not only will the card have the three pro bouts but five amateur fights featuring boxers from the Grande Prairie Boxing Club. At the press conference, the five local fighters that will be on the card were announced. Todd Reum, Gary Bredeson, Curtis Lizotte, Tom Prince and Quinton Ferguson will get the chance to perform in front of a crowd promoters are hoping will exceed the 3,000 mark. Tickets for the fight, ranging from \$12-25, are on sale at ticket outlets throughout Grande Prairie.

Zenner said while training in Texas with Cokes he had the opportunity to see his opponent and the local fighter isn't taking him lightly.

I saw him in the gym one time and I guess he's pretty big, all muscled-up," Zenner said about Haines. "But

like Curtis said, I'm not going to fight a bunch of stiff. I want to learn how to fight and when I do get a shot at the title in a few years hopefully I can win it."

Cokes has very high hopes for Zenner. The trainer said he's had the chance to know some great boxers in his life—Cokes counts Ali, Foreman and Frazier as acquaintances—and he thinks Zenner has got what it takes to be a world champion.

"Daren's been to school with me down in Texas and we've been teaching him how to fight," Cokes said. "He'll pretty soon have his PhD when he'll become a world champion. I think Daren's one of the greatest talents Canada's ever produced. I don't know how the people of Canada let him get away and get to me."

Cokes feels so positive about Zenner's future that the trainer

previously predicted a world championship for Zenner within two years. Acknowledging that may have been too rosy a picture, Cokes still feels Zenner's destined for greatness somewhere down the road.

"I might have been rushing it a bit when I said he'll be a world champion in 18 months but he's got so much talent that's still possible," Cokes said.

In the meantime, Zenner said he's ready to start paying his dues. He's going to take his blossoming career one day at a time starting with his Jan. 24 date in the Swan City. But he admitted he can't help but look forward to the day when he gets his shot at greatness.

"If I get a chance at a world title," Zenner said, "I don't just want to knock on the door, I want to blow it down."

Zenner talking deal with Top Rank Boxing



DAREN ZENNER

By TODD MAXWELL
Herald-Tribune staff

Daren Zenner would like to reassemble the pieces of his boxing career.

The career was left in a shambles when promoters (West-Can Promotions) pulled the pin on a proposed fight card that was to have featured his pro debut at the Johnny Macdonald Arena, Jan. 24th.

Within the few days that followed the collapse of that card, a disillusioned Zenner, 18, wound up in a fight at a local bar and before the night ended, found himself facing assault charges after scuffling with a cell mate.

Zenner feels he has learned the hard way how difficult it can be to learn aggression in the ring all day and then turn the switch off when he walks out the gym door at night.

"It was unprofessional what I did, but when the card went down my whole world fell in on me and I was feeling sorry for myself. I couldn't believe it, and it (fighting incidents) just happened. But, you learn from your mistakes, and I realize now I can't put myself in a position where it could happen again. You

can't blame a fighter for having an edge where you don't take crap from a guy who provokes you just because of who you are. Most good fighters have an edge, if they don't, they'll lack something in the ring. All you can do is avoid situations where that can happen (be provoked)."

But Zenner hasn't given up on his dream to someday be a world champion. He's continued training in Edmonton over the past several weeks, and now it appears that things may be taking a turn for the better for the Grande Prairie-born middleweight.

America's Top Rank Boxing, a promotional team that regularly has fight cards televised in the U.S., has reportedly shown interest in Zenner and would like him to join their stable of fighters on a five-year deal. But Zenner says he would first have to prove himself.

"It's a conditional thing. I would have to show them what I've got and they'd have to like what they see," said Zenner by telephone from Edmonton.

"The guy who flew up from Vegas and talked to me seemed really nice and everything. The deal they want is five years, which is too long I think, but I don't have too much to say anymore. I just want to get fighting."

Zenner says that the Top Rank promoters would also receive 40% of the take on all his fights while he is under contract with them.

Top Rank would like Zenner to move to Las Vegas as soon as possible to train at Johnny Tocco's gym where world heavyweight contender Evander Holyfield currently punches the bags. And, that would likely put Zenner's pro debut back in the foreseeable future.

But, one snag stands in the way of all that. Zenner is currently under a court order to not leave Alberta until after his scheduled court appearance late next month.

"I talked to my lawyer and there's a chance we might be able to get that (court order) lifted, I should know in a day or two," says Zenner optimistically. "I don't think they'll hold it against me for wanting to go back to work."

It's not known who will train Zenner in Las Vegas, but former world welterweight champion Curtis Cokes, who has trained Zenner extensively over the past year, has apparently given him a green light on the Top Rank deal.

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Daren Zenner lowers rating of Top-Rank sparring partner

By KEVIN PILLING
Herald-Tribune staff

Daren Zenner took another step towards rebuilding his boxing career which was all but shattered after a cancelled boxing card here in Grande Prairie in January and subsequent criminal charges stemming from a disturbance at a city bar and RCMP jail cell last month.

Yesterday, Zenner was in Edmonton's Panther Gym sparring with an opponent provided by representatives of Top Rank Boxing. The promotional team is renowned for its televised boxing cards on the ESPN sports network in the United States. Zenner says Top Rank has shown interest in bringing him into its stable of fighters and yesterday's sparring performance in Edmonton may have sealed the network's decision.

"I made him look like a fool," Zenner says of the Top-Rank-provided sparring opponent. "It's the sharpest I've felt in a long time."

"I was feeling good like this when I was in Grande Prairie then things got shot down," Zenner says of his time spent in the Swan City in January preparing for his professional boxing debut. The card was cancelled when promoters pulled the plug less than two weeks from the fight date.

"I sort of lost hope there for awhile but I've got it back again and it's a nice feeling."

Now the Grande Prairie-born middleweight says he just has to await the



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outcome of his court case at the end of this month before he takes another step towards getting his career back on track. He says Top Rank wants him to go to Las Vegas and train at Johnny Tacco's Gym, the same club that heavyweight contender Evander Holyfield works out at.

Zenner says he figures he'll be in Las Vegas by May 10 if things don't turn sour in court. He says Top Rank has arranged an apartment for him to live in while he's there.

Since his fledgling career took a

nosedive in January, Zenner's been left on his own to try and pick up the pieces. His previous trainer, former world welterweight champion Curtis Cokes, is back at his gym in Texas while Zenner stayed in Alberta.

The local boxer wasn't going to let himself be counted out though. He says he's been keeping in shape at his home in Bezanson "doing lots of roadwork and stuff" while awaiting his trial. Now he's happy to have the chance to look forward to getting back in the gym and into the hands of professionals.

"When I get down there (Las Vegas) I guess they're going to put me through a boot-camp and after that they're going to start me fighting every three weeks."

"They want to move me fast – carefully – but fast."

Cokes, Zenner's friend as well as trainer, was in touch with the boxer yesterday and took the news of Top Rank's apparent offer with mixed emotions.

"He told me to watch it, anything can happen," Zenner says of Cokes' advice. "But he's happy for me. There's nothing anybody can do, I just have to go down there and fight and see if I can make it with the big boys."

"What it's going to take now that's different than in the past is the little things I've got to do now. Be in bed by 10 every night and up by five every day and I have to stay out of trouble."

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Daren Zenner wins pro debut in Vegas

By TODD MAXWELL
Herald-Tribune staff

It was a long and winding road. But Daren Zenner is starting to like where it led.

The Grande Prairie-born middleweight (160 pounds) climbed through the ropes for his professional boxing debut at the Dunes Motel in Las Vegas, Nevada, Monday night, and after the scheduled four rounds against an opponent named Enrique Perez from Jaurez, Mexico, the long and sometimes frustrating journey that brought him to that point seemed all worthwhile.

Zenner knocked down the 5-3 veteran of eight professional fights late in the first round with a right uppercut, left hook, straight-right combination after an action-packed round where the two fighters went toe-to-toe.

"I was going to give him a sucker punch when he was down on all fours, but the referee grabbed me and told me I couldn't do that and he took me to the neutral corner," said Zenner of the wild opening round. "That actually gave him about a 15

count (time wise). He was still dazed when he got up and I rushed in and landed a couple more but he got me in a headlock and held on 'till the bell went."

The crowd of 1,000 people that packed the Dunes ballroom responded with a standing ovation after the two fighters finished going to war for three minutes.

The fight settled down after that as Zenner began to notice his hands getting sore from hitting Perez to the head.

"We were using eight-ounce gloves and it seemed like I was punching a rock. He was tough. I hit him with some big shots and he'd just give me a dirty look and keep coming at me."

Zenner believes he won each round easily in the unanimous decision because he can only remember getting hit once of any consequence, and he said it didn't hurt.

The Zenner-Perez bout was on the undercard of a Donald Stokes-Gene Fletcher junior welterweight fight that saw Stokes score a six-round victory.

Zenner, who had a 7-1 amateur career in Alberta and later in Texas under former

world welterweight champion Curtis Cokes, had to wait almost a year for his pro debut after turning pro last fall. A Grande Prairie fight card that was to have featured the Bezanston-raised fighter got cancelled in January.

Banner Promotions out of Las Vegas is handling the fight cards of Zenner and his stablemate - another white fighter out of Tennessee named Clark Earls - who also won his professional debut on the card.

"It was just an unreal thrill to finally get in there, it was a dream," said Zenner by telephone. "There was TV highlights on the late news and they called us (Zenner and Earls) up-and-comers with bright futures."

Zenner took the fight on one day's notice after the original opponent for Perez backed out at the last minute.

"Johnny (Tacco) asked me if I was interested and I said sure, I'm tired of training without ever fighting. He was a pretty good opponent for my first fight. It was a bit of a gamble because we knew nothing about him."

"But I'm just happy to be on the road. I

feel my style is so much better suited for the pro game."

"And, at least people can't say I'm taking on hand-picked fighters because I took the fight at the last minute for somebody else. If anything, I think Perez thought I was the hand-picked fighter because he came out all macho and hot dogging it up. But that didn't last long."

Zenner says his next fight is scheduled for July 16, also in the Dunes. And then, the 19-year-old hopes to return to Alberta because he is tentatively penciled in to fight on the undercard of the Ken Lukasta-George Foreman bout in Edmonton, July 31.

Zenner admits three fights inside of a month is a fast pace, but he wants to take the fights when he can get them. He hopes to have at least eight fights under his belt by the end of the year.

He made \$400 for his debut - \$100 per round. However, promoters have told him if he can put together even a modest winning streak over the next several months, he can expect to be making 10 times that much.



DAREN ZENNER

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Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Wed, Jul 4, 1990 Page 6

Fight cancellation 'blessing in disguise'



DAREN ZENNER

By KEVIN PILLING
Herald-Tribune staff

Daren Zenner didn't get a chance to up his boxing record to 2-0 last night in Las Vegas like he was supposed to, but said it may have been "a blessing in disguise."

Zenner was scheduled to take on Lewis Amato, a Mexican fighter with a purported record of 5-3. But Amato didn't show and the middleweight fight at the Dunes Hotel was cancelled.

"We tried to find somebody to step in all day long," Zenner said from Las Vegas last night. "Nobody would take me on one day notice."

"I think it's sort of a blessing in disguise though. My hands were pretty beat up and now

I can get 'em healed so I can have a bit of crack when I come up there."

Zenner was referring to developments that should see him fight in Edmonton July 31.

"The contract came through by fax today," the Grande Prairie-born boxer said. "I'll be fighting on the Foreman-Lakusta card at the end of the month."

Zenner said he doesn't have any details yet about his opponent, but does know it will be somebody who is boxing in the Las Vegas area right now. Boxing promoters often bring boxers from the same area to fill in their undercards.

"I'm really excited but I just wish I could go up with a 2-0 record. But people up there are

going to get to see what I can do and it's going to be on TV and stuff, so I'm looking forward to it."

Zenner also said he's not going to be putting much stock in a boxer's record from here on in. When he took on Mexico's Enrique Perez a few weeks ago, he thought he was going up against a fighter with less than 10 fights to his credit.

It turns out that wasn't so.

"I was talking to a trainer tonight and I found out the guy had 25 fights under another name and had fought under another name after that," Zenner said.

"I'm not going to look at records too much anymore. If I would have known his record, I probably wouldn't have been able to knock him

down in the first round because I would've been worried about it."

While Zenner didn't get a chance to fight last night, Clark Earls, Zenner's stablemate at Johnny Tacco's Gym in Las Vegas did. Zenner said Earls was "thrown in way over his head," but managed to win the fight anyway.

"He (Earls) was awesome. He out-boxed the guy all four rounds."

Despite missing a fight he was looking forward to, Zenner said he's still pretty lippy with the way things went for him today. He gets paid for the cancelled fight and the news from Edmonton took a bit of the sting out of the cancellation.

"I'll be in (Edmonton) about July 25," Zenner said. "I just can't wait to fight."

The Daily Herald-Tribune

Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Tue, Jul 17, 1990 Page 8

Zenner KO's management team

GP boxer prepares for second pro fight Monday

By JEFF McCOSHEN
Herald-Tribune staff

Daren Zenner floored his management team earlier this week.

Now he hopes to do the same to Tony Perez when he steps into the ring Monday in Las Vegas for the second fight of his budding professional career.

The 18-year-old Grande Prairie native dropped an advisory team headed by Stan Miller of Edmonton after the youngster found himself lost on a trail of broken promises. He's now under the tutelage of 80-year-old Johnny Tocco, who operates the well known Ringside Club in Las Vegas.

"They started talking crazy," said Zenner. "I told them 'I don't have to do anything. I'm the one taking the punches' . . . it's me I have to worry about. Not them."

Zenner decided he'd had enough with his former handlers when they told him they would require 45 per cent of the earnings from his first few fights.

Zenner said the initial understanding was that he would use whatever money he made in his first seven bouts to support himself. But Miller, who had dropped Zenner as a client only to take him back after the

youngster won his debut, came looking for money and Zenner balked.

Zenner also cited poor living conditions as a sore spot. Until making the move to Tocco, Zenner found himself putting up with a cockroach-infested apartment. In addition, Miller had Zenner living on an allowance of \$10 a day.

"This kid stood it for three months," said Tocco, who set Zenner

up in an apartment that includes the use of a swimming pool. "How can you live in Vegas on \$10 a day?"

Tocco has been in the fight business for 60 years and his gymnasium has been associated with the likes of former heavyweights Larry Holmes and Mike Weaver. Just this week, world heavyweight champion Buster Douglas and Evander Holyfield were in his gym to film promotional

material for their upcoming fight.

Tocco says he doesn't want any money from Zenner until the middleweight gets himself established.

"I think the kid's got a good future," Tocco said of Zenner. "I'm not going to let him down like they did."

Now that the situation is cleared up, Zenner is free to concentrate on boxing.



DAREN ZENNER

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Daren Zenner rings up another victory

By TODD MAXWELL
Herald-Tribune staff

Bezanson's Daren Zenner chalked up another win in his young professional boxing career Thursday night, but he had to ring Norman's bell a couple times to do it.

Zenner, now fighting out of New York under the tutelage of Tommy Gallagher, found himself pitted against a hometown boy when he took on Philadelphia's (Stormin') Norman Bell at that city's 'legendary house of pain', the Blue Horizon.

The fight was on the undercard of a Top Rank Boxing matchup between Sergei Artemiev — also trained by Gallagher —

BOXING

and Philadelphia's Bryant Paden. The card was televised by ESPN.

Zenner fought as a light heavyweight for the first time against Bell, who weighed in at 175 to Zenner's 171. And it looked for a while that those four pounds and slight height and reach advantages would be too much for the Grande Prairie-born pugilist.

Bell lived up to his moniker and came out storming and had Zenner in a bit of

trouble near the end of the first round. But the story changed in the second round of the bout scheduled for four.

Zenner started scoring with some big right hands and dropped Bell to the canvass 50 seconds in when he polished off a combination with a right uppercut.

Zenner landed more heavy blows in the third round and put Bell down with a right hook with 30 seconds to go. But despite having the 'North Philly' fighter in trouble a couple times, Zenner was unable to put him away.

Bell finished strong and landed some shots as the clock ran down in the fourth

round when Zenner appeared to tire.

One judge saw the fight even but two judges awarded 10-8 rounds for the knockdowns in the second and third and both scored the fight 38-36 giving Zenner a majority decision.

That improved the 20-year-old's pro record to 6-0-1 while Bell dropped to 2-2. Both fighters were 10-1 as amateurs.

The ESPN coverage crew saw Bell land 98 of 235 punches thrown, while Zenner landed just 77 of 201. But Zenner won the fight by landing the more telling blows.

Artemiev won the main event over Paden by a unanimous decision.

The Daily Herald-Tribune

[Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Mon, Apr 20, 1992](#)Page 9

Zenner shows flare for the dramatic

Local fighter scores knockout win in dying seconds of bout

By TODD MAXWELL
Herald-Tribune staff

Daren Zenner may soon attract a huge following if he can continue to display the combination of a flare for the dramatic and the ability to end a fight with one punch.

Boxing fans love both.

Bezanson's Zenner, now fighting out of Heartsdale, New York, extended his unbeaten string to 7-0-1 with three KO's as a professional with a knockout victory on a Top Rank Boxing card in Monticello last night. But it wasn't a run-of-the-mill knockout. In fact, it was, well, dramatic.

Zenner, 20, found himself pitted against a 28-year-old from Brooklyn named Moses Lewis, who only had four fights on his pro record at 2-1-1 with a KO, but as an amateur, Lewis did have a New York State Golden Gloves title to his credit.

Zenner, who stands 6-foot-2 and weighed in at 174 pounds for the light heavyweight bout, started strong in the scheduled four-rounder. He landed 32 punches to Lewis's 16 to clearly win Round 1.

Lewis fought a much better second round before being staggered by a Zenner right hand with a minute to go. But

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"One of the most dramatic knockout wins we've had in a long, long time."

— Fight commentator Al Bernstein

Lewis finished the round strong and was the busier fighter in the third round as well, scoring well with a series of punches that pinned Zenner on the ropes.

Zenner still had an 86-77 edge in landed punches after three rounds according to ESPN-TV's account, and fight analyst Wally Matthews said he had given all three rounds to the Grande Prairie-born fighter but that the second and third rounds were close and the fight could go the other way.

And for a while, it appeared as though it might. Lewis fought a superb fourth round and for two and a half minutes it even looked as though he might steal the fight, depending on the judges' interpretation.

But in the dying seconds of the fight, Zenner rendered all the judges' score-

cards irrelevant. Zenner, with his back against the ropes, landed a right uppercut with 20 seconds left. Lewis tied up Zenner and winked at his cornermen to signify that he never really felt it. But when they broke the clinch with five seconds to go, Zenner landed a right hand that Lewis did feel.

The bomb dropped Lewis to the canvas and you cannot be saved by the bell in any round according to the boxing regulations in the state of New York.

So, while referee Seth Rubinstien was in the process of counting Lewis out, the bell rang. Technically, the knockout now goes in the record book at 3:06 of the third round.

Matthews said that in 12 years of Top Rank boxing coverage, he could never recall a fight ending that way before where a fighter was not saved from being knocked out by the bell. In the old days, the fight would have been declared a draw or a no-decision.

Fellow commentator Al Bernstein summed the fight up by saying "Zenner provides us with one of the most dramatic knockout wins we've had in a long, long time".

In the main event, Doug DeWitt won by split decision over Ontario's Dan Sherry.



DAREN ZENNER
—ended it with one punch

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Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Fri, May 29, 1992Page 13

Zenner back in the ring

Daren Zenner will climb back into the ring tonight to take on a fighter from South Carolina in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

The 20-year-old from Bezanson takes an impressive record of eight wins and one draw into the scheduled six-rounder, which is part of a fight card being televised on ESPN.

Zenner, who has pulled out some fights in the later rounds, likes the fact that he's secured a six-round bout.

"I always seem to get my second wind at the end of the fourth round," he noted.

In his last fight in July, the light heavyweight scored a unanimous decision over a Casey Trusdale of North Carolina.

About four weeks, Zenner developed a kink in his neck sparring that he's still not quite over. Even with the bothersome injury, which has been diagnosed as minor whiplash, Zenner declared himself ready to go tonight.

Zenner's knockout win under protest

BOXING

By **JEFF McCOSHEN**
Herald-Tribune staff

Daren Zenner is quickly discovering that, in the sport of boxing, what happens in the ring is only half the battle.

The 20-year-old from Bezanson finds himself embroiled in a battle involving his trainer, Tommy Gallagher, and the trainer of an opponent Zenner knocked out in a fight in Atlantic City, New Jersey two weeks ago.

OUTCOME PROTESTED

The trainer of South Carolina fighter Michael Payne, whom Zenner knocked out in the fourth round, has protested the outcome of the fight on the grounds that Zenner didn't undergo a drug test after the bout and also because no officials were on hand to witness the taping of Zenner's gloves.

Zenner concedes that both are valid points, but says only because no officials came to his dressing room.

"It's not like we were hiding or anything," Zenner said from New York. "It was partially our fault, I guess, but we didn't foresee that this would happen."

A similar complaint was filed against another of Gallagher's fighters, Sergie Artemiev.

Zenner and Artemiev, who



DHT File Photo

Local boxer Daren Zenner may again have to knock out his most recent opponent to settle the score once and for all.

both won in convincing fashion, could have the result of their respective fights stripped from their records. Zenner upped his mark to nine wins and one draw in his 10 professional bouts with the knockout — the fourth of his professional career.

A more likely scenario, said Zenner, would be to have the knockout removed from his record, but his record would remain at 9-0-1. And, he will probably have to give Payne a rematch.

"I don't mind that at all," said Zenner. "I'm going to hurt him worse next time.

"If we fought 100 times, I'd

beat him 99 times and this next one is not going to be that one time for him,"

Zenner says he's doing his best to take the whole schmozzle in stride, noting that boxing has become known for this sort of thing.

"It's just a big pile of bull," he said. "We didn't do anything wrong. I mean, we didn't put lead in gloves or anything like that."

Zenner's bout followed an ESPN-televised heavyweight battle between former world champion Tony Tubbs and Bruce Seldon.

Tubbs won that fight by a unanimous decision. 



Staff File Photo by Christine Vanzella

Local fighter Daren Zenner will climb into the professional boxing ring tonight for the first time in almost two months.

Zenner back in action tonight

By TODD MAXWELL
Herald-Tribune staff

Bezanson's Daren Zenner yesterday took a fight on a few hours notice for a professional boxing card that goes tonight in Newark, New Jersey.

But it's not as if the 21-year-old light heavyweight is going into the bout out of shape. Zenner was originally scheduled to fight on another card on Dec. 9, but that deal fell through late last week.

SCHEDULED ANYWAY

"I was scheduled to fight anyway so it was no problem," said Zenner by telephone yesterday. "When they phoned our gym looking for a light heavyweight, Tommy (trainer Tom Gallagher) said 'we have one here all ready to go.'"

Zenner puts his 9-0-1 pro record on the line against an 11-4 black fighter who will be in front of a partisan hometown crowd.

"I get to be the guy with the black hat again, but I'm used to that," Zenner said.

Zenner, who fights out of

BOXING

New York, is also scheduled to fight Dec. 23, and tentatively on Jan. 24 in Atlantic City. That would keep him on track for his personal goal of fighting four times before March 6th, when he is pencilled in to fight in Madison Square Gardens on the undercard of the Pernell Wittaker-Buddy McGirt world welterweight title fight.

Wittaker, a former undisputed lightweight champion of the world, will be out to win his third title after also winning a junior lightweight title. He is No. 2 in the world in the pound-for-pound ratings.

McGirt is a reigning welterweight champion.

Zenner's last fight was nearly two months ago when he disposed of South Carolina's Michael Payne in Atlantic City. Zenner knocked Payne out in the fourth round, but later had the KO distinction stripped from the win because of a technicality.

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Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Wed, Dec 9, 1992 Page 13

Zenner headed for a showdown

By TODD MAXWELL
Herald-Tribune staff

It's not a world title fight. Far from it.

But for local boxer Daren Zenner it might as well be.

Zenner, 21, who hails from Bezan-son but now fights out of New York, has signed a contract to put his 10-0-2 record on the line against Louis (Hon-ey Boy) Devalle in a battle of unbeaten professional light heavyweights on March 6th in Madison Square Garden.

The fight will be on the undercard of the Pernell Wittaker-Buddy McGirt world welterweight title bout.

BIG FIGHT

"It's like my world title fight," said Zenner by telephone this week. "It's like I've been waiting my whole life for this one."

Zenner was originally scheduled to fight tonight on a card in Atlantic City but he had to drop out because the Devalle contract now prohibits either fighter from taking a bout before the March 6th showdown.

Devalle sports a 10-0 record with seven knockouts but Zenner isn't scared off by those numbers.

Zenner admits being up against a talented fighter but feels Devalle may

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be ripe for the picking.

"The difference is I've been fighting a lot tougher guys. They've built (his record) up."

"They're (Devalle's camp) taking me lightly because I'm actually a super middleweight."

"He's got a fast, snappy jab and a good left hand but no hook at all," says Zenner of his opponent, who is ranked in the top five light heavyweights in New York state. "The hardest thing about the fight will be slowing him down. He runs like (Hec-tor) Camacho. If he finds out he can't hurt you early, he'll stick and move the whole fight. That's why I want to have a shootout with him in the first round because I don't want to chase after him all night."

Both fighters will make roughly \$5,000 U.S. and the winner of the bout has been promised a spot in the world light heavyweight (175 pounds) rankings by at least one sanctioning body.

Ironically, Zenner plans to move down to super middleweight from now on because he feels the division's 168-pound limit is his ideal fighting



DHT File Photo

Local fighter Daren Zenner has agreed to put his unbeaten 10-0-2 pro record on the line in a showdown fight with 10-0 Louis Devalle of New York.

weight when he trains hard for a fight. The 6-foot-2 Zenner has been fighting at about 172 pounds for several months.

"It's a very important fight for both of us. A win would open a lot of doors but whoever loses is going to be set back quite a bit."

"All the sparring, all the training and all the roadwork will be done. I'm taking extra care for this one. If he beats me, he's really going to have to earn it."

Devalle is a southpaw and Zenner's camp is already lining up lefthanded sparring partners.

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Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Fri, Feb 5, 1993 Page 11

Zenner 'out-slicked' in Madison Square Garden

By TODD MAXWELL
Herald-Tribune staff

Bezanson's Daren Zenner won a few battles but lost the war Saturday night in New York's Madison Square Garden.

Zenner, 21, lost a six-round, majority decision to New York's Louis (Honey Boy) Devalle in front of 12,000 noisy fight fans, but both professional light heavyweight boxers paid a price.

Devalle, 25, improved to 11-0 with seven knockouts when two judges gave him four of the six rounds, but the third judge saw the fight even, likely awarding Zenner a 10-8 round in the fourth.

In that round, Zenner caught his 25-year-old opponent with a left hook that sent Devalle to the canvas for the first time in his career. However, the punch re-fractured a bone in Zenner's left

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hand that he had originally injured a few years ago when he was fighting out of Las Vegas. Zenner still has a pin in the hand from the first time it was repaired.

From that point on in the fight, Zenner knew he would be giving up rounds in hopes of landing a big right hand to salvage the bout with a knockout. But catching up to Devalle — known for his stick-and-move skills — would not be easy.

It wasn't until the last half of the final round that Zenner managed to land some decent punches with his right that opened up a cut over Devalle's left

eye. The cut required 11 stitches following the fight, but Devalle had escaped with a win.

"No excuses, I got out-slicked," said Zenner of the outcome. "He took a beating but he scored more points. I told him during the fight that he couldn't run forever, but in a six-rounder he got away with it."

"After I hurt my hand I tried to set up the right but I waited a little too long. After the knockdown he would flurry and run, flurry and run. He was slick. He had good legs and he could run. He was tough to cut off. I couldn't get him settled down enough to catch him flush."

Zenner, whose record slips to 10-1-2, remains upbeat about taking the first loss on his pro record.

"I don't feel I lowered my stock at all. Everybody knew he ran and nearly ran out of time. His eye was nearly swelled shut."

RING NOTES: Pernell Whitaker won a unanimous decision over **Buddy McGirt** in the main event. With the win, Whitaker — a former undisputed lightweight champ — takes McGirt's WBC welterweight title and climbs into the world's top three in pound-for-pound ratings... Zenner's trainer/manager, Tommy Gallagher, made Devalle's camp an offer for a rematch but reportedly got no interest... Zenner, who will see a specialist next week, believes his hand will have him out of action for six weeks... Zenner earned \$5,000 U.S. for the fight... On fighting in Madison Square Garden: "Wow, what a rush".

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Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Mon, Mar 8, 1993Page 11

A look at the darker side

Promising fighter suffers career-ending brain injury

By TODD MAXWELL
Herald-Tribune staff

Grande Prairie's Daren Zenner knows of the danger inherent to the sport of boxing, but last week he had to take a closer look at it than ever before.

Zenner, 21, fights out of Tommy Gallagher's gym in New York and has a professional record of 10-1-2. But he was shaken by the sport recently in a way far more devastating than from any punch he's taken on the chin.

Sergei Artemiev, a best friend of Zenner's who fought out of the same gym under Gallagher, spent a week in a coma after collapsing in the 10th round of his USBA 12-round lightweight title fight March 21 in Atlantic City, N.J.

Neurosurgeons operated that night for a life-threatening rupture of a vein connecting the brain and the protective membrane encasing it. The injury also caused dangerous swelling of the 24-year-old's brain.

Artemiev, who emigrated from Russia three years ago to turn pro, was upgraded from critical to serious last Tuesday.

Doctors induced his coma

BOXING

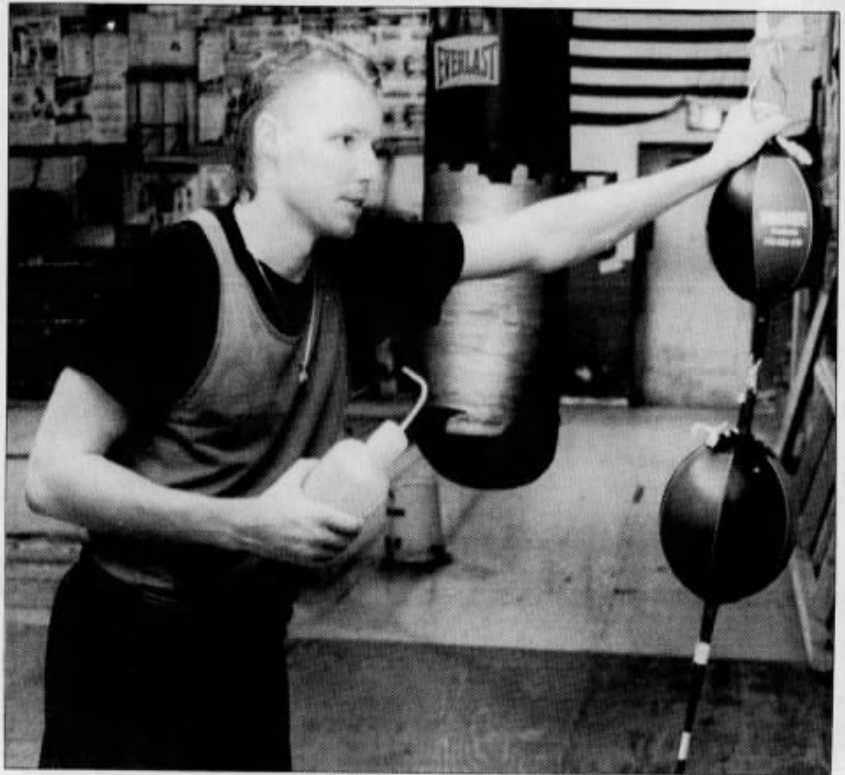
with paralytic drugs and sedatives to keep him still in hopes his swollen brain would heal. On the weekend he was removed from life support machines and doctors stopped giving him paralytics. Artemiev isn't brain-dead but it's too early to tell whether he's suffered permanent brain damage or how long a recovery will take.

BEST FRIEND

"It really bothers me, he's a best friend of mine," said Zenner by telephone. "Even when it happens to someone you don't know, you say it's too bad and it's bad for boxing. But when it happens to a friend it's really tough to swallow."

Zenner says that at least two fighters in their gym, and possibly more, are going to retire after facing the grim reality of Artemiev's injury.

"The guys wind up being under a lot of pressure to quit, mostly from their wives and mothers, people close to them," says Zenner. "Everybody who isn't a boxer says 'why do you want to do that?'



DHT File Photo

Local professional boxer Daren Zenner has had to face the fact his friend Sergei Artemiev may have suffered permanent brain damage in a recent fight in Atlantic City.

But Zenner says other sports, like rodeo's bull riding and auto racing, are also dangerous and fear can't be part of the equation for a top athlete.

"As far as me wondering if it's going to happen to me, it doesn't enter my mind. Every time you go in the ring you take a chance but it just can't enter your mind."

Artemiev can move his limbs and open his eyes now, and it is believed he reacts to his wife's voice. He says a few words incoherently and cannot engage in conversation yet.

Artemiev and his wife have a three-month old baby.

"It wasn't like it was one big punch," said Zenner. "It was from an accumulation of

punches. I felt something was wrong because Sergei just didn't seem like himself in that fight."

Boxing experts felt Artemiev, 18-1-1, would be a world champion someday because of his dedication and technical skills. But his boxing career is said to be over, even if he makes a complete recovery.

Zenner moves to 7th

Boxer Daren Zenner of Hartsdale recently received a ranking of seventh in the International Boxing Federation's super middleweight division. Zenner will fight eighth-ranked Tony Thornton at the Blue Horizon in Philadelphia on Jan. 17 in a fight to be televised on USA Network.

Zenner achieved the IBF ranking by winning the Westchester County title in August and the USBA Atlantic Regional title in October.

Putnam Reporter Dispatch

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On the move

Bezanson boxer Daren Zenner fighting his way home

PAUL SPASOFF

Herald-Tribune staff

Daren Zenner is almost ready to come home.

After nearly five years away, the 23-year-old native of Bezanson is close to making his return but before he does, the professional pugilist has one small thing to take care of.

"My dream, when I left Grande Prairie the last time, was not to return until I fought for the world title," he said in a telephone interview from his home in New York. "I'm a fight away from it, so when that happens I'll do it."

Before he can receive a shot at the world title though, he must first dispose of Tony Thornton (36-6) in the USBA national title bout. Zenner, the United States Boxing Association's east region champion, will face Thornton, 35, Jan. 17 in a match that will be televised on the USA Network from the Blue Horizon in Philadelphia.

"I've studied tapes of him," the Grande Prairie-born fighter said. "It's gonna be a hell of a fight. It'll definitely be my toughest.

RATED NO. 7

"I'm rated No. 7 by the International Boxing Federation and he's No. 8 and has been in the top 10 for about the last eight years. He's an old rugged war horse."

Although Zenner feels he is ready for the title bout, his preparations have been hampered by injury. While he was training last week, he suffered a contusion over his ribs and was forced to quit sparring.

"My timing was pretty good actually, I'm in pretty good shape," commented the 6-foot-2, 168-pound Zenner, who fights as a super middleweight. "I would have liked to get more sparring in for the fight because I only got two days in.

"But the game for me is not so much physical as it used to be — it's more of a mental game now. Physically you can only get in such good a shape without overtraining. From there on out it's mental attitude and whether you believe you're a winner. That will determine whether you go to the top or not."

Zenner put himself in line for the Thornton fight by knocking out Adam Garland, an up-and-comer with a 22-2 record, in the 12th round of their match in At-



ZENNER

lantic City Aug. 25. In addition to helping him ascend from obscurity to No. 7 in the IBF rankings and No. 19 in the World Boxing Council rankings, the victory also improved his record to 14-1 with seven knockouts. However, he isn't planning on flooring Thornton with one punch.

"Everybody that I've fought as a super middleweight I've knocked out," he said with a thick Bronx accent. "But with Thornton I'm not going to look at trying to unload on him unless I hurt him, because he's fought the best in the world and has never been knocked out. I'm just going to stay out of range — I've got a longer reach and I'm just going to outbox him."

GETS A SHOT

Actually, how he wins is of no real concern. As long as he gets past Thornton, he gets a shot at a world title and big-money purses.

"I got a two-fight deal," Zenner explained. "After I beat Thornton, I fly to England to fight Chris Eubank for the world title — the World Boxing Organization super middleweight title. Then following that fight, beating Eubank, I would fight Roy Jones for the IBF super middleweight title. And that's a money fight for me.

"So I've got some big fights lined up if I can get over this one with Thornton."

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Zenner trades one set of gloves for another

The former hockey player-turned boxer highlights the 'War in Westchester' card.

By John Perney
Staff Writer

At the start, Daren Zenner's boxing career was on ice.

After all, the Hartsdale resident wasn't using boxing gloves. He was too busy throwing off his hockey gloves instead.

"I was suspended from hockey when I was 13," said Zenner, an Edmonton, Alberta native who moved to Westchester 3½ years ago. "I wound up going to the boxing gym and I haven't stopped."

A 6-foot-1 super middleweight who just turned 23, Zenner highlights tomorrow night's "War in Westchester" boxing card at the Westchester Marriott Hotel in Greenburgh. Zenner will bring his 15-2-2 record into the ring for a 10-round bout against Marc Simmons of Queens.

Zenner, a right-hander, is currently ranked 12th by the International Boxing Federation, but at one point was the IBF's No. 7

BOXING

super middleweight. That was before a second-round technical knockout loss to Tony Thornton seven months ago.

"I was one shot from getting a title fight," said Zenner, hinting at Thornton's September matchup with IBF champion Roy Jones, Jr.

Pete Brodsky, Zenner's trainer for the past year, believes his fighter is rebounding nicely from that setback.

"A loss like that can ruin some guys, but for others they can take it and make themselves a better fighter," Brodsky said. "I think Daren is going in that direction."

Both Brodsky and Ron Scott Stevens, matchmaker for Miracle Promotions which is putting on the card, described Zenner as more of a stand-up puncher than a boxer who dances around the ring.

"He's a very hard hitter," Stevens said. "He's got the capability to take someone out with one punch. He's only a heartbeat from getting a major ranking."

Zenner himself admitted that he likes to "rumble" when the situation calls for it. But more important, he's just looking for a victory tomorrow over Simmons, who he knows is better than what his 5-8-2 mark suggests.

"He's tougher than Pete McNeeley was, and I'm not making \$25 million for it," Zenner said.

If Zenner gets past Simmons, his next fight will likely be in early October against Canadian Eric Lucas, ranked sixth by the IBF.

Considering that a hockey stick and skates often led Zenner to the penalty box, he isn't surprised about what he's accomplished with boxing gloves in the ring.

"I definitely belong where I'm at," he said. "Hopefully, before my next birthday, I'll be fighting for a world title. If I get the right opponents, hopefully I'll get a shot."

Zenner in the ring

Herald-Tribune sports staff

Daren Zenner is climbing his way back up the ladder.

After suffering a loss to Tony Thornton in a USBA super middleweight title bout last January, the 23-year-old Bezanson boxer has won two consecutive fights to earn a shot at Tyrone Frazier for the New York State Super Middleweight Title.

"After losing to Thornton I took a couple of months off, but now I'm ready to come back," said Zenner after weighing in at 167 3/4 pounds for tonight's match in Long Island, N.Y. "I beat a couple of other guys and now I'm ready for Frazier."

Zenner, currently ranked 22nd by the WBC, earned the title bout on the strength of fourth-round knockouts of Adam Garland and Mark Simmons in May and August respectively. He'd like to add Frazier to that list.

"I think I can dump him," Zenner said of former heavyweight champion Joe Frazier's nephew, who lost a 12-round decision to WBA light heavyweight champion Virgil Hill last year. "He fights a lot like his uncle — uses a lot of left hooks. So, hopefully I can use that to my advantage."

Zenner a champ after win

PAUL SPASOFF

Herald-Tribune sports writer

Daren Zenner can now add champion to his boxing résumé.^N

The 25-year-old Bezanson product won a 12-round decision over Tyrone Frazier in Long Island, N.Y., Thursday night to claim the Westchester, USBA and New York State super middleweight titles.

"It was a hell of a fight," Zenner said in a thick Bronx accent after the fight. "I beat the shit out of the guy, but he wouldn't go to sleep. I threw everything but the kitchen sink at him. It was an adrenaline rush."

Frazier, who is the nephew of former heavyweight champion Joe Frazier, caught Zenner with a left hook in the second round and split his eye open. However, after some quick patchwork by his cutman, Zenner took control of the fight — which earned him a standing ovation from the capacity crowd.

"I bounced him from ringpost to ringpost," Zenner, who improved to 18-2 with 10 knockouts, noted. "No one has ever knocked this guy down before, but I think I came the closest to doing it. In the fifth and sixth rounds I really pounded him."

"But this guy was tough. I bought him a beer after the fight and asked him why he didn't go down. This guy has heart."

The six-foot-two, 167-pound Zenner, didn't come through the fight unscathed, though. He received six stitches over his eye and suffered injuries to both hands.

Zenner is scheduled to step into the ring again Dec. 1, however he believes the fight will have to be rescheduled as the eye will take around 90 days to heal.

When he does return he will be working his way towards a world title bout. Although Zenner estimates he is two or three matches away from fighting for a championship, he insists he won't make the move until he's ready.^N

"Daren Zenner controls his own destiny," maintained Zenner, who dedicated his latest victory to his grandfather who passed away on the night of his last fight. "When I feel I'm ready to win it, I'll go ahead with it. But I don't want to fight no tomato cans to get it."

Zenner is planning to return to Bezanson next May.

Zenner puts world title dreams on hold despite sixth-round TKO of Gatlin

Former Hartsdale resident opts for plastic surgery on broken nose

By Michael R. Rose
Staff Writer

Darren Zenner's world title plans were put on hold even before he stepped into the ring against James Gatlin late Sunday night in the Old Glory Building at Yonkers Raceway.

After suffering a broken nose while sparring last Tuesday, Zenner pulled out of the fight, but then decided to fight Friday because it was to be televised on ESPN2.

Zenner, a former Hartsdale resident now living in the Bronx, managed to fight through breathing and stamina problems to score a sixth-round TKO at the 2:03 mark of a scheduled 10-round cruiserweight bout in front of about 1,000 fans.

Zenner said he will consult a plastic surgeon, today. That will most likely finish Zenner's year

He said he may look for a fight before Christmas.

He planned to fight for the NABF or NABO title next month and move into the top five rankings of the WBO. Zenner hoped a fight with WBO light-heavyweight champion Dariusz Michalczewski could then happen by the end of this year or early next year.

Zenner, 26, has waited a long time for his world title shot. Waiting a little longer doesn't seem to bother him.

"I'm used to it," Zenner said. "I'm numb to it. As long as I keep going I'll get my shot eventually."

Zenner, who improved to 21-2 with 12 KOs, landed a straight right hand that dropped Gatlin (12-16, eight KOs) to one knee. Referee Benji Esteves stepped in and decided to stop the fight.

Gatlin, a veteran who seemed to frustrate Zenner at times with his defense, started the sixth round with his mouth wide open and breathing heavily.

Zenner was landing his straight right consistently and caught Gatlin at the right time.

"I knew I had to wait until later in the fight to catch him," Zenner said.

Zenner, whose nose was bloodied during the fight, said he

wanted to quit because of his nose. He also suffered a low blow in the fourth round.

"I felt like quitting in the second round, but I thought about all the hills I run," Zenner said. "If I can run up those hills, I can fight tired for 10 rounds."

Zenner was scheduled to fight Berry Butler, but the New York State Athletic Commission wouldn't allow the fight.

In the first fight on the card, Gabriel Hernandez of Yonkers celebrated his 24th birthday with

a fourth-round TKO victory over John Douglas in a scheduled four-round light-heavyweight fight.

Hernandez, a native of the Dominican Republic and a former Yonkers PAL boxer, caught Douglas, who was making his pro debut, with a short left hook that put him flat on his back. Referee Joe Santarpia stopped it at 2:23.

"It's a great win for me," said Hernandez, who boxed for the Dominican Republic in last summer's Olympics. "I'm never going

to forget this night."

Hernandez is 3-0 with three KOs.

In the main event, Tony Marshall of Albany (25-7-6, nine KOs) captured the vacant IBC junior middleweight title over Philadelphia's Kevin Tillman (15-12, four KOs).

Tillman was unable to continue at the end of the 10th round.

Marshall was scheduled to fight Darren Maciumski, but Maciumski was removed from the fight because of medical reasons.



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Zenner will get his title shot after all

Herald-Tribune sports staff

After two weeks of uncertainty, Daren Zenner says his title fight with German Dariusz Michalczewski, the World Boxing Organization's top light heavyweight, is on.



ZENNER

Zenner will fight Michalczewski, the undefeated German whose record stands at 34-0 with 27 knock-

outs, Dec. 13 in Hamburg, Germany.

"It's a dream come true to come from Bezanson and get a chance to fight for a world title," Zenner, 20-2-0 and ranked eighth by the WBO, said Monday from New York.

An initial agreement for the fight, which was originally supposed to take place in Dusseldorf, was thrown into question earlier this month when Roy Jones Jr. was stripped of his World Boxing Council light heavyweight title for refusing to fight Michael Nunn, the WBC's No. 1 contender.

It was rumored that Jones wanted to fight Michalczewski instead and if that had happened, Zenner would have been the third man out.

But that didn't materialize and the fight was thrown back into Zenner's lap on Friday. Zenner, who is battling bronchitis and coming off of a recent nose surgery, says he considered turning it down after being left in limbo for two weeks.

But the chance to fight for a world title, even if it does leave him just three weeks to train, was too much in the end.

"I'm not one to turn things down," said Zenner, 27, who will get \$45,000 for the fight — his biggest payday as a pro. "Besides, I've got the tools to take this guy."

Zenner had his first full workout for the fight yesterday when he ran six miles and got in a few rounds of sparring. He plans to run eight miles a day and is bringing in a former opponent of Michalczewski's as a sparring partner.

Zenner, who has already seen it all in his 10 years in the fight game, has a hunch that Michalczewski's people were just 'jerk-ing me around' with talk of a postponement.

"He's probably been running up and down the Swiss Alps for the past month getting ready."

The Daily Herald-Tribune

[Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Tue, Nov 18, 1997](#)Page 11

Zenner confronts his past

Regrettable incident years ago plays on the mind of boxer

JOHN HARDING
Herald-Tribune sports writer

Daren Zenner won't duck his past. Not the hearsay about an altercation he had with his grandfather. Not the vow he made to Wanda Zenner when he left Bezonson for the very last time.

Nine years after declaring he wouldn't be back until he had his world title shot, rumors surround Zenner and an incident with his late grandfather like a black robe.

"We did get into an argument and we did get into a fight. It happened. I was a young kid, 16. Alcohol was involved. I argued with a girl and he stuck up for her over me. Do I wish it happened? No," Zenner, 26, said by phone from his Bronx, New York home, replaying a story that's had a mind of its own and 10 years to grow.

A tough kid with a "wild side," scuffled with his No. 1 fan, supporter and late grandfather Willis Johnston 10 years ago.

The incident cuts deep into Zenner's conscience, even now. Johnston, who boxed in the army, was 74 when he passed away during surgery to repair a heart valve Aug. 25, 1995. It was the same night Zenner recorded a fourth-round TKO over a boxer named Mark Simmons for his 17th win.

"I loved my grandfather, more than anything. But at the same time, even as a kid, I was 16 going on 44. There's no way I was going to back down from anyone, including my father-including my grandfather. That's how it went."

"The rumor started that I just went over to his place and beat him. No, that's not what happened. To be honest, I wish I wasn't even there for it to have happened. It was alcohol-induced, on both our parts."

"It was a bad situation and I shouldn't have struck him. But my grandfather and I became even closer after that," said Zenner, who fights for the World Boxing Organization's light-heavyweight championship of the world on Dec. 13 at Hamburg, Germany's 5,700-seat Astor-Sporthalle.

It'll be more than a personal triumph when Zenner enters the ring against Poland-born Dariusz Michalczewski, undefeated in 35 matches as a professional.

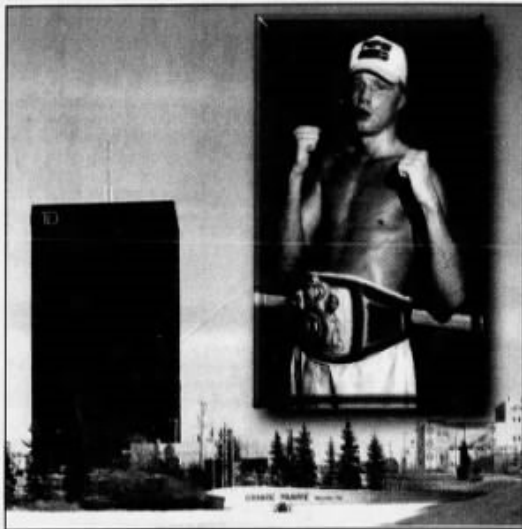


Photo illustration by Joey Boswell

"My grandfather and I were very close until the end. He was the one always telling me to come home and see him because he was gonna die soon. Not getting home eats me alive every day, it haunts me."

"But these are the things that will be remembered when I go into the ring with Dariusz Michalczewski. It's what I've paid the price my whole life for," said Zenner, whose boxing trail after he turned 18 toured through Dallas, Texas, then Las Vegas where he won six professional fights and finally to New York City.

Zenner is only the third Canadian light-heavyweight to get a world title shot since 1987.

Winnipeg's Donny Lalonde beat Leslie Stewart and won a World Boxing Council crown in October of that year. Sugar Ray Leonard took the WBC belt away from Lalonde on Nov. 11, 1988, the same night fellow Canadian light-heavyweight Willie Featherstone lost a World Boxing Association title fight to then WBA champion Virgil Hill.

Danny Stonewalker challenged Michael Moore for the WBO light-heavyweight title in December of 1989 in Pittsburgh but was KO'd in the fifth round.

No Canadians have boxed for a world light-heavyweight crown since, which makes one wonder why Zenner flies to Germany tomorrow with so little fanfare.

"This should be big news. Unfortunately for boxing in Canada, it hasn't been," former Featherstone manager Ray Rutter, now president of Toronto-based Canada Star Boxing Inc., said of Zenner's upcoming fight.

One reason for the hush may be that Zenner, who lives with his wife Rosanne and two young children in the Morrison Park area of the Bronx, is listed in most boxing magazines as an American. He's also been away a long time.

Strangely though, Zenner, who's 20-2-0 since his first professional fight in Las Vegas in 1990, is as much a mystery here in Grande Prairie as he is elsewhere.

He's a phantom in a city that followed the sport so closely throughout the 1980s as its boxing son, heavyweight Willie deWit, carved out a post-Olympic career after winning silver at the Games in Los Angeles. It was during that time that Johnston brought his grandson into Grande Prairie two nights a week to train with the late Clarence Wesloski Sr. at a gym in Wesloski's basement.

From Bezonson, a village 32 kilometres due east of Grande Prairie, Zenner is

about to reach a pinnacle deWit never hit as a professional.

To this day, the hype, or lack thereof, in the place where he learned to box as a 14-year-old doesn't bother him.

"Maybe if I would have had the support and had it easier in the beginning I would never have reached the world championship level. I did it on my own. I do things my way and I don't kiss the media ass. It's my character."

"I was a wild kid, I was in a lot of street fights. Why do things get caught up with me? Because it's Daren Zenner, who's a boxer. But if I let things like rumors get me down, I would have quit boxing a long time ago," said Zenner.

Bezonson was his home for 15 years. He went to elementary school there. He attended Sexsmith Secondary until Grade 10, then went to Dallas and came home intermittently over the next two years to work in the oil patch. "I was 15, there were a few problems at home, so I left," said Zenner, whose father Tom now lives near Edmonton.

After going 9-1 as an amateur and defeating a Texas Golden Gloves champion who had over 200 amateur fights, Zenner's professional calling came from Las Vegas and later from New York.

"It was a short amateur career but my boxing style suited professional better. I like to sit back and plan my punches. It's something I just did naturally," he added.

Zenner was 12-0 on March 6, 1993, the night he lost his first professional fight to current WBA champion Louis Del Valle. The tilt took place at Madison Square Gardens in front of 15,000 people.

"He went to the hospital, I went to the club," Zenner said of the loss, which came by decision.

Del Valle is managed by the same company and man who represents Zenner, New York's Star Boxing and lawyer Joe DeGuardia. DeGuardia secured Zenner's \$55,000 dream fight back on Oct. 22, leaving little time for promotion in New York, or in Canada for that matter.

"I've had calls from writers in Germany. They're making a big thing about my German heritage. This guy's never been beaten and he's knocked out a lot of German fighters along the way. I might even hear cheers when I enter the ring," said Zenner, a 10-1 underdog as recently as Tuesday.

Should he beat Michalczewski, his next four fights would take place in Germany for a minimum of \$100,000 each. Michalczewski's agents, Universum Boxing Promotions, would handle all the promotions.

Zenner, who thinks he can box until age 30 or better, doesn't make apologies for the geography between himself and a past that has left him unfairly estranged.

"Instead of whining and cryin' about things and wishing people liked me, I take it like it is. I gotta live my life, and I've gotta live with what happened with my grandfather, nobody else."

"As soon as I win the title, I'm getting a plane ticket home. And I'm not coming there for a parade, or for a party. I'm coming home to see my family. And the first place I do go, is to my grandfather's grave."

Sports Comment

Jeff
McCoshen



Zenner's detractors have kept a close eye on him

Without fail, nobody in the rich history of sports in the Peace Country has had more doubters than a boxer named Daren Zenner.

They're everywhere - this army of naysayers - and they pop up virtually every time a morsel of news concerning the 26-year-old light-heavyweight boxer from Bezonson appears in the Daily Herald-Tribune.

The cloud of doubt has nothing to do with his ability.

"I must warn you that anything you print about him should be thoroughly checked through independent sources," a former coach of the Grande Prairie boxing club informed us not too long ago by e-mail.

It was a sentiment, and a suggestion, our sports department has been familiar with ever since we started tracking Zenner's career nearly 10 years ago.

Don't believe everything the kid tells you, we've been told on many occasions.

So, not ones to turn our backs on good advice from our faithful readers, we took it to heart. And so be perfectly honest, we almost expected to find a few things about his quite unbelievable story that didn't add up.

There were just too many people, we reasoned, that were saying the same thing.

So we checked it out, for example, when Zenner phoned from Las Vegas one day six years ago and said that he was working under the tutelage of a trainer named Johnny Tocco.

Johnny Tocco? C'mon, Daren, we thought. You might have fooled us with some of this other stuff, but now you've gone too far.

Johnny Tocco, whose legendary career of working with the best heavyweights of the world was chronicled in a lengthy article in Sports Illustrated, surely wouldn't be wasting his time with an unknown skinny kid from Canada.

So, thinking we finally had Zenner pinned, the call was put into Johnny Tocco.

Lo and behold, the story checked out. Not only did Tocco know the kid, he thought Zenner had some talent and might even have a future in the fight game.

It's been a similar scenario pretty much every step of the way, try as we might to poke holes in what, undeniably, has been a classic underdog story.

As he's made his way through the jungle of professional boxing, Zenner has gone through a maelstrom of managers and trainers.

The instability only served to help people to write him off as a castaway that was living a pipe dream.

If people don't like Zenner because of his past (Jon Harding's pull-no-punches story to the left lays it all out on the table), that's fine.

But even his harshest critics have to admit that Zenner has accomplished more and gone farther than they ever would have imagined.

And the fact of the matter is that on Dec. 13, some 5,700 boxing fans will cram into a stadium in Hamburg, Germany to watch a fellow from Bezonson, Alberta, Canada fight hometown hero Dariusz Michalczewski for the World Boxing Organization light-heavyweight championship of the world.

And yes, we did place a few calls to Germany to find out if anybody there has ever heard of a boxer named Daren Zenner.

Turns out, so and behold, they're expecting him.

Grande Prairie's better known boxer caught off guard by Zenner

Herald-Tribune sports staff

Willie deWit's boxing career was by no means shrouded in obscurity.

He was king, here and across Canada after winning a silver medal at the Los Angeles Olympics and later becoming a Canadian heavyweight champion.

deWit, now a criminal lawyer in Calgary, remembers hearing the name Daren Zenner "a year or two ago."

He knew Zenner was from the Grande Prairie area and was surprised to learn yesterday that a fighter from his old stomping grounds had secured a title fight, over a month ago no less.

"A world title shot for a Canadian, what's his record? It's kind of surprising to hear about it for the first time, but then again, boxing's not as popular as once was," said deWit, who won his Canadian title in 1986 with a 12-round decision over

Ken Lakuata.

After a devastating 1987 loss to Bert Cooper in Regina in a fight that was televised on CBS, deWit, now 37, fought to a 20-1-1 record and then retired.

His ranking climbed as high as 10th in the World Boxing Association and 11th in the International Boxing Federation. Zenner's Dec. 13 opponent Dariusz Michalczewski, 29, once held IBF and WBA light-heavyweight titles.

He abandoned those to claim the less recognized World Boxing Organization title with a win over Virgil Hill last spring.

"The WBC, IBF and WBA are the three main boxing bodies. It depends what kind of shape he's (Zenner) in, but if he's focused, three weeks of training isn't too bad," said deWit, who still fits a bit of training into his own busy schedule.

"I hope the best for him," deWit added.

The Daily Herald-Tribune

Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada • Fri, Dec 5, 1997 Page 13

Hunting the 'Tiger'

Zenner accepts his underdog role for WBO title fight but vows he won't back down

JON HARDING
Herald-Tribune sportswriter

Dariusz "the Tiger" Michalczewski was a video image that Daren Zenner had never studied outside of a television screen.

An obstacle, but only one of many that Zenner must overcome if he's to upset the reigning World Boxing Organization light heavyweight champion of the world.

"Everything that's gone wrong is exactly why I'm going to win this fight. Getting tired isn't something that crosses my mind. It's more about getting focused. If I'm a bit out of shape, my mind will carry it over," Zenner said before leaving for Hamburg, Germany, last Saturday.

Zenner, ranked seventh by the WBO, is an underdog, and not solely because of his 21-2-2 record nor because this Saturday's bout takes place in Michalczewski's backyard.

The main event of a five-fight undercard at Hamburg's Alsterdorfer Sporthalle, which seats 5,700 people, should start by about 10 p.m., German time.

Nose surgery late last May kept Zenner idle, right up until Oct. 22 when word arrived that Saturday's title tilt was virtually a go. Michalczewski's camp at Universum Box Promotion, sensing a potential match up with Roy Jones Jr., balked for 10 days after Oct. 22.

The uncertainty threw a jab at Zenner's training routine. To top it all off, Zenner came down with bronchitis and his wife Rosanne, pregnant with the couple's third child, had a miscarriage.

'KEEPS PILING UP'

"It just keeps piling up. But at least I feel good about the last three weeks of training," said Zenner, who doesn't begrudge the subtle maneuvering on the part of Michalczewski's managers.

"If I was WBO champion and I was fighting Daren Zenner, I'd do the same thing. He could underestimate me though."

His opponent, a 29-year-old, five-foot-10 knockout puncher, won 139 of 150 fights as an amateur before turning professional on Aug. 16, 1991.

Michalczewski has 35 wins, no losses and no draws since then, with 28 of his wins coming by knockout.



Daren Zenner's climb up the boxing ladder surprised those who knew him when he was a skinny kid from Bezanon with big dreams.

In 1994, he was both WBO cruiserweight champion and WBO light heavyweight champion, making him the first German boxer to be world champion in two different weight classes at the same time.

"Everything that's gone wrong is exactly why I'm going to win this fight."

— Zenner

"He's a tough fighter. He thinks I'm gonna knock Dariusz out," Zenner said of one of the several sparring partners who've helped him prepare for Saturday.

Zenner TKO'd Chirino on Nov. 8, 1996, at Yonkers Raceway in New York. Chirino's advice and a bit of videotape of a recent fight between Michalczewski and Virgil Hill are all Zenner and trainer Pete Brodski have had to work with.

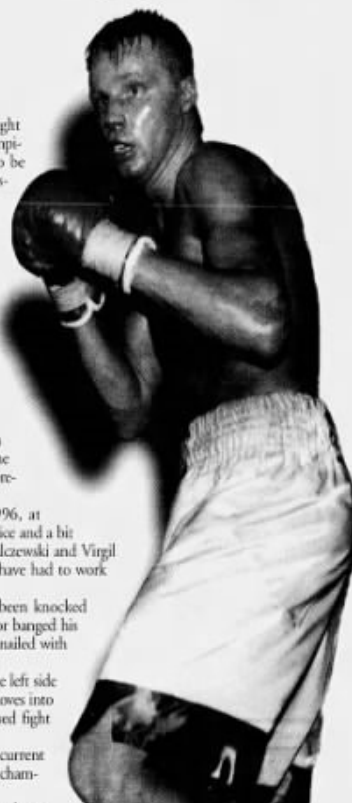
"He comes to a fight in shape but he's been knocked down. No one's gone at the top of his head or banged his liver either. Virgil moved to the left and got nailed with everything."

"We'll move to the right and try to nail the left side of his head. It's soft and if he moves left, he moves into my power hand," said Zenner of his proposed fight plan.

He broke his left during a 1993 loss to current World Boxing Association light heavyweight champion Louis Del Valle.

"It's fine. Over time, you learn how to tape better and I wear bigger gloves now," said Zenner.

Please see Page 12 as we check in on the last Canadian to hold a light heavyweight world title. Also, get up close and personal with Daren Zenner and his complete fighting past a professional.



Daren Zenner is a man with a plan heading into his title fight against Dariusz Michalczewski.

'The indomitable human spirit. Good for Daren'

We asked around to see what others thought about Bezanon boxer Daren Zenner fighting for the WBO light heavyweight championship Saturday night in Hamburg, Germany. Here's what some people involved in the sport in Canada had to say:

- Executive director of the Alberta Amateur Boxing Association Dennis Belair chuckled when he heard the news about Daren Zenner's title bout:

"Daren Zenner, wow, that's unbelievable. Daren had this plan of grandeur way back when he trained in Edmonton and we used to say, 'yeah, c'mon Daren, right.' He did it. The indomitable human spirit — good for Daren."

- Friends of Boxing is the country's only publication of its kind, geared specifically towards the sport of boxing in Canada. Its publisher, Warren Rutherford of Saskatoon, had this to say about Zenner's title shot:

"There hasn't been many. Donny Lalonde, Willie Featherstone who lost to Virgil Hill in Bismarck, North Dakota; Yvon Durell, who was from Montreal and got KO'd by Archie Moore on Dec. 10, 1958 in Montreal. That fight was for the National Boxing Association light heavyweight title."

- Donny Lalonde, the former Canadian and later World Boxing Council light heavyweight champion said from his office in Montreal:

"The WBO's not as credible an organization as the other

three but it's still a big win, if he could do it over the German, regardless of what kind of belt he would wear around his waist."

- Former City of Edmonton Alderman Ron Hayter, who's also president of the Canadian Professional Boxing Federation, was with the Edmonton Boxing and Wrestling Commission when it gave Zenner his first professional license. He's currently the commission's executive director.

"I've followed Daren Zenner all along whenever the results pass over the desk here. The WBC, IBF and WBA are the mainstream boxing divisions but the WBO's not a bad one. There are so many out there nowadays and alot are run out of people's basements. The WBO's not one of those," said Hayter, who'd love to see Zenner ranked among active Canadian light heavyweights.

To do so, Zenner would have to fight once a year in Canada.

The current Canadian light heavyweight title holder is Eric Lucas of Montreal. He's currently 24-3-3. The No. 1 Canadian contender is Drake Thadzi (29-8-1) of Moncton followed by none other than Donny Lalonde (37-4-1) who recently came out of retirement.

"I wish him the best of luck and just hope he gives himself enough time to acclimatize. The time difference, everything, makes it pretty tough to fight over there," Hayter said.

Compiled by Jon Harding
Herald-Tribune sportswriter

Sports Comment

Jeff
McCoshen



Zenner ready to give it his best shot in fight

Has Daren Zenner been set up for a fall?

It sure looks that way.

With all due respect to Zenner, who's climbed the boxing ladder pretty much on his own since leaving his Bezanon home 10 years ago, not everything about his WBO light heavyweight title fight against Dariusz Michalczewski adds up. Zenner himself, nobody's fool, probably knows that.

At the same time, his fight Saturday night in Hamburg, Germany against undefeated Michalczewski is the chance of a lifetime.

Zenner's professional record of 21 wins, two losses and two draws is impressive, but it's not the 35-0 (with 28 knockouts) that Michalczewski brings into the ring. So what gives?

Even from a boxing layman's point of view, this fight stacks up as a classic case of the management team of a champion looking for a credible, but not overly dangerous, opponent to pad the record for another payday down the road.

In a phone call from Hamburg this week, Zenner said the media there was really playing up his German heritage.

They had obviously been tipped off by Michalczewski's promoters.

Did that little fact make Zenner a more attractive opponent than some other fighter from North America with a similar record?

Remember, promoters are always looking for a way to sell a fight.

Zenner's paid his dues, but other fighters ranked even higher than Zenner's current No. 7 WBO ranking have too and they weren't invited to Germany.

It's troubling, too, that Zenner didn't receive official confirmation that the fight was a go until just three weeks ago.

The 26-year-old had just had nose surgery and, just a few days before the offer came forward, had talked of taking a few months off to allow it to heal properly.

Then suddenly his long awaited title fight was dangled under that battered nose and Zenner was faced with a difficult decision.

As he kicked around idea of whether to accept the fight, the thing Zenner kept coming back to was that it was the opportunity of a lifetime that might not ever come his way again.

He felt he had no choice but to take it on.

And so he did, and he goes into the ring Saturday night with a lot of questions running through his mind. Will his nose hold up to the punishment he's sure to absorb? Has he trained long enough?

One thing Zenner knows for sure is that he's going to have to knock Michalczewski out to win Saturday. As it clearly states in the rules of boxing, you don't win a decision against the champion in his backyard.

And one thing Zenner does have going for him is that, as most of his fights have shown, he can take a fair amount of punishment and still win. But he's never done that against a fighter of Michalczewski's calibre.

Whatever happens Saturday night, you can't begrudge Zenner for taking his shot.

And if he happens to land it, who knows?

Grande Prairie's Zenner fighting in Hamburg

Grande Prairie light-heavyweight **Daren Zenner**, 26, answers the bell tonight in Hamburg, Germany, with a



The Associated Press

Big fight tonight for Daren Zenner

world title on the line. Zenner (20-2) will fight World Boxing Organization champ **Dariusz Michalczewski**, 35-0, at the 5,700-seat Alsterdorfer Sporthalle.

Zenner's title shot ends with TKO

Swollen right eye forces Bezanson boxer to give up fight in 6th round

JON HARDING

Herald-Tribune sportswriter

TKO'd by an undefeated champion, Daren Zenner crossed the Atlantic yesterday with his right eye half closed but his chin held high.

Poland-born Dariusz "the Tiger" Michalczewski, the WBO's reigning king, extended his record to 36-0-0 with a convincing victory over Zenner. The 26-year-old from Bezanson didn't win a round, giving up points to Michalczewski's jabs, throws from the blind side.

Doctors ended the scheduled 12-round title tilt halfway through the sixth round, at about 3 p.m. MST and 11 p.m. in Germany, because of Zenner's closed eye.

"I took a helluva shot right to the eye socket and my eye continued to swell shut. I would have continued if it wasn't for the swelling, he never hurt me once," said Zenner.

But Zenner agreed with the call that brought a slugfest to an early end.

"It was a good call by the officials. I couldn't see and any more damage could have meant a serious injury. You live to fight another day," Zenner added.

He rocked Michalczewski two or three times with his own jab/over-hand right combinations in the third and fourth rounds in front of a capacity crowd of 5,700 at Hamburg's Alsterdorfer Sporthalle. The fight was

televised throughout Germany.

"We came right out, started slugging and I wobbled him two or three different times. I tried to avoid his left hook, which is his best punch, so I kept my right hand at the side of my head. I gave up a lot of jabs doing that but I didn't care. They looked good but they didn't bother me," Zenner said afterwards from his hotel in Hamburg.

Zenner now has 21 wins, three losses and two draws.

MORAL VICTORY

Even with the loss, securing a title shot and overcoming a lot of pre-fight adversity gave Zenner a moral victory. He also brought home a \$55,000 payout for his troubles.

Zenner felt he was using faulty scales all week. When weigh-in arrived Friday, he was 300 grams over the light heavyweight cap of 175 pounds. The scale, lent to him by Michalczewski's promoters, was set a pound heavy. Zenner claimed. He spent part of Friday afternoon running the halls of his hotel wearing a rubber suit to shed the weight. To make matters worse, the gloves he was asked to wear were too small and when he arrived at the venue Saturday, the windows in his dressing room had been left wide open.

"These aren't excuses, but they jerked me around on a couple of things. Still, I went in there, fought a guy who's undefeated and has held three of the four titles. It was short-notice fight, I had bronchitis for eight days and I still gave it a hundred per cent.

"I had the champion almost out on his feet two or

three times," Zenner said.

Michalczewski wants Roy Jones Jr. (35-1-0) next.

Zenner, meanwhile, can see the sun setting on his boxing career, which started at age 14 in Grande Prairie, moved on to Edmonton, Dallas, Los Angeles and then to New York, where he lives with his wife and two small children.

"I just told my manager, I don't want to worry about any fighting right now. Nine out of 10, I'll take a few more fights and get another shot at a title within a year. If I don't get it, then that'll be it.

"And it'll be in North America. I'm definitely not going to fly into some guy's backyard and get jerked around again," he said.

Two of Zenner's three losses as a professional, including Saturday's, were to current light heavyweight world champions. Louis Del Valle, who Zenner lost a four-round decision to in March 1993, is currently the WBA's light heavyweight champion.

"I came from Bezanson and went all the way to the championship of the world. If it wasn't for the swelling, it would have gone 12 rounds and then gone to the judges, and I probably would have lost the decision. But then again, I was clubbing the guy around. Maybe I would have caught him late," said Zenner.

Zenner's agent already has a short-term future mapped out.

"(Zenner) will get another shot within the year. Michalczewski's arguably one of the best light heavyweights in the history of boxing. They loved Daren over there," Joe DeGuardia said yesterday from the Bronx.



File photo

Daren Zenner's bid for the WBO light heavyweight boxing title ended in the sixth round with a loss to Dariusz Michalczewski.

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Zenner versus the Golden Boy?

JON HARDING

Herald-Tribune sports staff

Donny Lalonde and Daren Zenner are a bend away from a collision course.

Lalonde, 38 and in the midst of a wonky comeback, needs a title fight fast, preferably against World Boxing Association light heavyweight champion Louis Del Valle.

Zenner, nursing a broken right wrist that may require surgery, could find himself thrown into the

Golden Boy's path.

And Joe DeGuardia, who manages both Zenner and Del Valle, likes the sound of a September main event between Lalonde and Zenner, staged on Canadian soil.

Boxing is indeed a business of twists and turns.

"In Canada? Sure, if the money's right. I'd like to hold it in Canada. Lalonde's had an offer on my desk for awhile, we'll give him a shot," the New York City lawyer and owner of Star Boxing said yesterday.

The fallout from Saturday's can-

celled heavyweight bout between Evander Holyfield and Henry Akinwande may have rippled all the way down to Zenner, the 27-year-old right handed-puncher from Bezan-

son. Del Valle, 27-1-0, was to be matched up against the WBA's No. 1 contender Dario Matteoni of Argentina on the Holyfield-Akinwande undercard. When Akinwande's positive test for Hepatitis B landed a knockout punch to the entire night, DeGuardia went to work planning a July 18 unification bout between Del Valle and reigning World Boxing Council light heavyweight champion Roy Jones Jr.

As of yesterday, DeGuardia was no longer in dealing mode. "The Del Valle versus Jones Jr. fight is on," he said.

Good news for Zenner, maybe better news for Lalonde.

"We'd give Lalonde the fight with Louis but he'd have to beat Daren first. And frankly, if Daren's wrist is OK, he'll knock Lalonde out," said DeGuardia, presuming of course that Del Valle accomplishes what many, including Lalonde himself, believe will be an impossible feat on July 18 (no location yet).

Jones Jr., 36-1-0 and coming off a six-round knockout of Virgil Hill, is arguably the best pound for pound boxer on the planet.

"Good, I'm glad they've got that fight booked. But chances of a Del Valle win are next to none. And that's what a Zenner fight with me is predicated on. If Del Valle loses, I'm not gonna want to fight him anyway.

"I'd have no problem fighting Louis Del Valle, Jones Jr. or any other champion, so long as it's for a title," Lalonde said yesterday from Montreal.

The Winnipeg native beat Eddie David and won the WBC light heavyweight title in November 1987. Sugar Ray Leonard took it away a year later, almost to the day.

Lalonde took a few years off through the mid-1990s. His comeback trail went for a tailspin on May

28 in White Plains, New York.

He and 33-year-old Kevin Pompey, a journeyman who jumped up in weight classes for the six-round bout, fought to a draw. Lalonde also injured his right hand.

"Sure I was disappointed with the result, but it was his home town, his home crowd. From a boxing standpoint, I controlled the fight," said Lalonde.

Zenner was at ringside watching. At 21-3-2, he hasn't fought since being TKO'd in the sixth round by reigning World Boxing Organization light heavyweight champion Dariusz Michalczewski last Dec. 13 in Hamburg, Germany.

"Unless there's a title shot on the other side of a Lalonde fight, it's not really worth it for either of us. And the way he looked two weeks back, he's gotta be about done," Zenner said of Lalonde.

So long as a specialist doesn't recommend surgery for Zenner's wrist on July 6, DeGuardia believes a September bout between the two Canadians would serve Zenner well.

"Lalonde'd be a nice knockout for Daren. He'd be a named opponent and another step towards another title fight," said DeGuardia, who'd been trying to ink another late-May fight for Zenner before the injury.

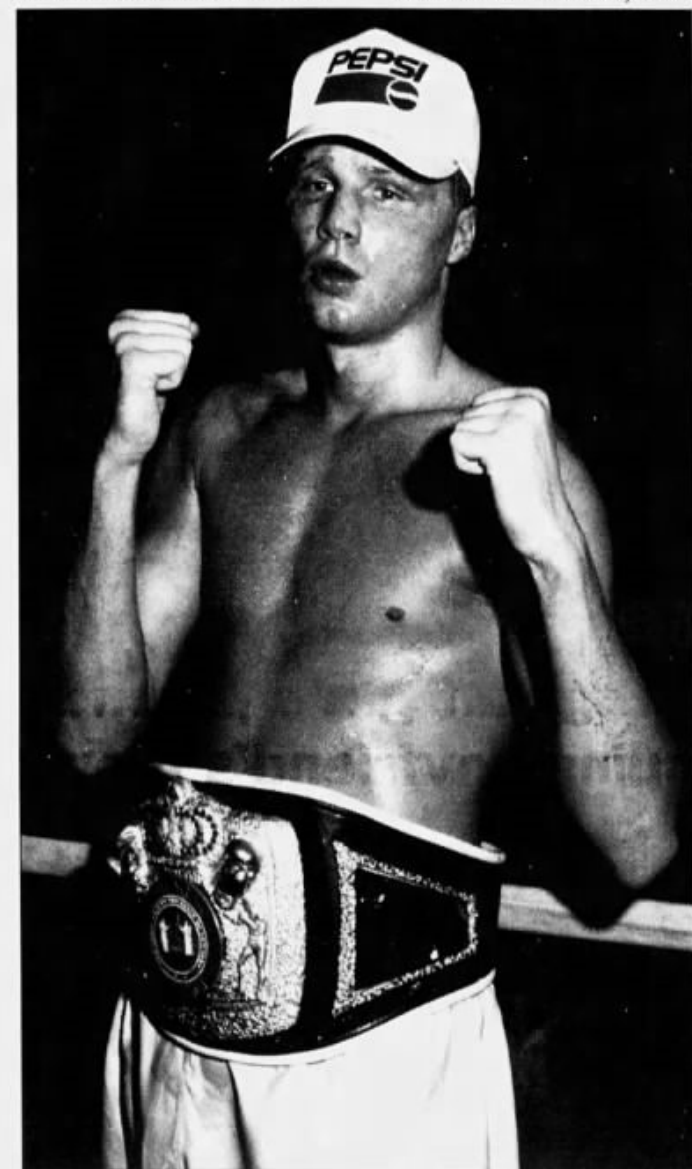
One of his potential opponents-to-be was Ramzi Hassan, a cruiser weight from California with a 35-12-2 record.

All the activity has Zenner hoping his wrist and hand, which he broke sparring about a month ago, won't keep him idle until 1999. If it's broken as badly as Zenner thinks it might be, bone graft surgery might be necessary.

"They're talking about taking bone from my hip and using it to fix my hand.

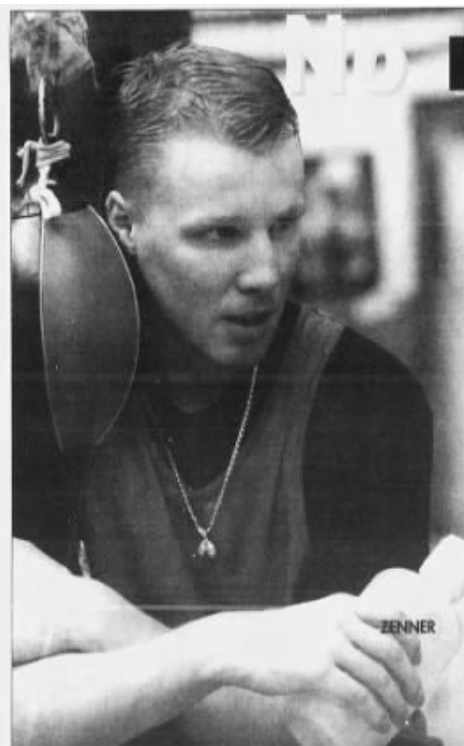
"I've talked about fighting three more years until I'm 30. If that kind of surgery is what it'll take to keep going, it's something I'll have to think about.

"Either way, I'll know a lot more on July 6," said Zenner.



Herald-Tribune file photo

Does Bezanon's Daren Zenner have his sights set on Donny Lalonde? Time will tell.



No rumble in the Bronx

Contract squabbles delay Bezanson boxer's first tilt in over a year

WAYNE CHAMBERLAIN
Herald-Tribune sports writer

Daren Zenner's bizarre voyage towards an International Boxing Federation title shot continues.

The latest twist in the Bezanson native's career saw his fight that was scheduled for Wednesday canceled due to a contract disagreement with promoter Joe DaGuardia of New York City's Star Boxing.

Had Zenner fought, it would have meant extending his current contract with Star Boxing for two more years. With what could lie ahead in terms of matches, Zenner would prefer to negotiate a new deal.

"If I would have went along with it, then I would have been obligated for another two years to the same contract," Zenner said in a phone interview from New York City.

When Zenner went before the New York State Athletic Commission on Tuesday, he said he was told his current contract — signed three years ago — may be void because there was no end date in it.

It was a surprising development that will delay Zenner's comeback.

Once ranked No. 2 as a light heavyweight by the World Boxing Organization, the 27-year-old, who has since moved up to cruiserweight, has not fought since he suffered a six-round technical

knockout at the hands of the reigning WBO champ Dariusz Michalczewski in December of 1997. The fight took place in Hamburg, Germany. A broken wrist suffered in May of 1998 has also kept Zenner out of the ring.

Despite the layoff, Zenner — who has 21 wins, three losses and two draws as a pro — refused to step into the ring without a better contract.

"I've been to the top of the mountain once. I fought for the championship of the world. If things aren't done the way I want them to be done now, I don't need the money from fighting. I fight because I want to, and I want to win a world title. Not that I'm trying to be greedy or anything, but I've got a wife and a kid and this is a hurt business that I'm in. If it's not done right then there is no sense in doing it."

"It has to be 100 per cent for Daren Zenner or I'm not going to get into the ring."

The reason Zenner is taking the contract negotiation so seriously is because of the possibility for a title shot later this year. Zenner said that if he wins two more matches, he will begin negotiations with promoter Murad Muhammad to face current IBF cruiserweight champion Arthur Williams (30-4-1) for the title later this summer.

"If I don't look out for my interest in these promotional contracts, they could hurt me after I do win the title. It can be the difference between making \$1 million and making \$100,000."

"It might not mean much now when you're fighting for nothing and fighting a stumblebum from New Jersey, but if I get myself locked into it now I can't turn my back on it when I've got the title fight."

Recent events have taken a toll on Zenner.

"It gets nerve wracking and frustrating to the point where you're getting older and do you really want to do it. To tell you the truth, if I didn't know that I could get the fight with Arthur Williams sometime this year for the championship of the world, I would probably retire."

Adding further to his frustration was the bungling surrounding last night's canceled fight.

"Up to last Thursday, they couldn't come up with an opponent for me to fight. So I said I'll help you guys out and fight a heavyweight if the guy is 230- or 240-pounds. They found a guy at 205 from New Jersey. They call him 'The Preacher.' I don't even know his name."

"He has a losing record and has never been knocked out. He hangs in there and puts on a good show. I said all right."

Zenner currently weighs in at 205-pounds. However, he'll shed another 10 pounds to for his next scheduled bout — a May 7 tilt in Boston — after hooking up with a Beantown promoter.

"I only need two fights. I can fight at the beginning of May and fight at the end of May. Then I can start the negotiations with Murad Muhammad for the fight with Arthur Williams."

Eyes on Arthur Williams; IBF cruiserweight belt

WAYNE CHAMBERLAIN
Herald-Tribune sports writer

A promise in the boxing world is hardly a rock-solid kind of foundation to rest career hopes upon, but it appears to have worked out for a Bezanson turned New York pugilist.

Daren Zenner believes a favour he performed for boxing promoter Murad Muhammad two years ago has put him in a position for a title shot against current International Boxing Federation cruiserweight champion Arthur Williams (30-4-1).

Prior to fighting reigning World Boxing Organization light-heavyweight champion Dariusz Michalczewski in Germany in December of 1997, Zenner dropped out of a combined Muhammad and (Zenner promoter) Joe DaGuardia card because of a broken nose he suffered during training. When it became apparent the card would fold because they couldn't find a fighter to replace Zenner, he agreed to step back into the ring just a few days prior to the event.

"I told Murad Muhammad at the time that I was doing him a favour. I'm fighting with a broken nose and somewhere down the line you've got to repay me," Zenner said during a phone interview from his Bronx apartment.

"He says don't worry about it and if you're going to do it, let's just do it and get it over with.

"Needless to say I went in and knocked the guy out. Now Joe and I are calling in the favour. (Muhammad) has penciled me in for August or September to fight for the IBF cruiserweight championship of the world. Arthur has a mandatory defence coming up against a Russian (Vassili Jirov, 20-0, on June 5). Providing he beats him, then I fight him next. But I have to get two quick wins this summer first though."

The first of those fights is scheduled for May 27 in Rhode Island, but Zenner, who currently sports a



Herald-Tribune file photo

Bezanson-raised Daren Zenner hasn't stepped into a boxing ring for an official bout in over a year. That hasn't stopped the New York City pugilist from maneuvering into a position that could see him fight Arthur Williams late this summer for Williams' International Boxing Federation cruiserweight belt.

21-3-2 record, has a feeling that fight might not come off. He is sure, however, that a DaGuardia card set for June 17 will.

Zenner only knows his June opponent's nickname is 'The Preacher.' He doesn't know his name and doesn't care.

"I just want him to show up and then I'll knock him out."

Depending on what happens in Rhode Island, the 27-year-old is prepared to fight another boxer shortly before or after the June 17 bout. By winning both of those, Zenner said he has been told he will be guaranteed a top-10 IBF ranking — and a title shot.

Whether it comes to pass the

way Zenner has laid out remains to be seen. A veteran of trying to navigate the shifting sands of the boxing world, he learned a long time ago that the fight game changes from hour to hour.

"Unless you're a Mike Tyson or a Roy Jones Jr. (WBC and WBA light heavyweight champ, 38-1-0), you're a log in the ocean and you've got to roll with the flow. I used to take these things to heart early in my career but I've adjusted to these things. The only thing I can do is keep training and get ready for these fights."

Anticipating two easy victories to ensure the title shot, Zenner has already hired "the best pad man in

New York" to get him ready for Williams.

"I've got a 70 per cent chance of beating Arthur. He's slow. He can be counter-punched all day long. Hopefully over the next few months I'll get it down in my training so that it becomes a habit and I can open up on Arthur."

Just getting the chance to fight for a title again has Zenner pumped. While good paydays would come from being the IBF title holder, Zenner has a simpler reason for wanting to beat Williams.

"I want my two daughters (two-year-old Amanda and four-year-old Francesca) to be able to say their dad was a champ."

Daren Zenner's title shot trilogy takes a new twist

WAYNE CHAMBERLAIN
Herald-Tribune sports writer

It's time for Plan B.

That is what Bezanson turned New York fighter Daren Zenner has to reconcile himself with after watching International Boxing Federation cruiserweight champion Arthur Williams lose a recent bout.

Had Williams (30-5-1) defeated Russian boxer Vassily Jirov on June 5, and Zenner won two subsequent fights — the first of which he won last Thursday — Zenner said he was promised a title shot later this summer courtesy of Williams' promoter, Murad Muhammad. But when Jirov scored a technical knock out of Williams in the seventh round of their bout on the recent Roy Jones Jr.-Reggie Johnson undercard, Zenner's title shot got KO'd with him.

"I was cheering for Arthur," Zenner said from the Bronx last night. "Not that I cared about him. I knew in my heart of hearts that I could knock Arthur out if I got the title shot."

"It was right there for the taking. I know I'd be world champion. Now it has slipped through my fingers. Now I've got to start again."

Zenner now has his sights set on two cruiserweight champs — Jirov and the World Boxing Association's Fabrice Tiozzo (40-1, 26 KO).

Given his preference, Zenner would like to fight Jirov (21-0). He wasn't impressed by the big Russian's win over Williams.

Plus, he added, that bout would likely be televised and take place in the U.S., whereas fighting Tiozzo, who is French, would require Zenner to likely fight in France.

The 28-year-old intends to take bouts every six weeks over the next few months in order to get ranked

**"I was cheering for Arthur.
Not that I cared about him.
I knew in my heart of hearts
that I could knock Arthur out
if I got the title shot."**

— Daren Zenner

and earn a title shot.

Zenner most recently knocked out an anonymous opponent on June 17 to run his record to 22-3-2.

He gave up 30 pounds to the other fighter, who was a heavyweight, and sent him to the canvas thanks to a couple of big right hands just 53 seconds into the second round.

One good sign coming out of that win was that the wrist Zenner broke in May of 1998 held up nicely.

"I felt strong at the cruiserweight (195-pounds)," said Zenner, who used to fight as a light heavyweight. "To knock out a guy at 225-pounds, you need some jam. I really carried my power up."

"The hand felt great and I don't have a mark on me."

He plans to fight next on July 20 in New York against another heavyweight. He doesn't mind giving up the weight if it means he can re-establish himself after losing to current WBO champ Dariusz Michalczewski in Germany in December of 1997.

"I will definitely be fighting for the championship of the world again. It's just a matter of finding the right time and the right spot for me."

"An opponent will come again."



Herald-Tribune file photo

ZENNER

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Fight night for Zenner

**Daren Zenner of
Bezanson will be at
centre ring Friday
night on ESPN2**

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Wayne's World

Wayne
Chamberlain



Zenner's a true character

He's a close and personal friend . . .

Characters. Everybody loves a good character.

If ever there was a guy from this neck of the woods that you could describe as a character, it would be Bezanson fighter Daren Zenner.

He left northern Alberta years ago to pursue his boxing dreams. They've taken him all over the U.S. and even to Germany.

After a stint in Las Vegas, he moved to New York and settled into an Italian area in the Bronx.

The time spent there has rubbed off on him. He speaks with a thick Bronx accent — the kind you hear in movies like 'Good Fellas' and 'The Godfather'.

When he talks about dealing with people like John Gotti Jr. and other New York wise guys, there is a tendency to wonder if he's making this stuff up.

But time after time, everything Zenner has claimed has checked out.

He called me a week ago telling me that he had lined up a fight with Arthur Williams — the former-IBF cruiserweight champ. He said it would be on ESPN. He said it was a done deal.

I said I'd check into it. Sure enough, I'm looking at ESPN's website on the weekend and there is Zenner-Williams being promoted as the main event on this week's Friday Night Fights show.

So I'm a little more apt to believe the 28-year-old when he tells me he and his new lawyer — Tom Harvey — had dinner with Robert DeNiro the other night.

DeNiro? The guy in the movies?

Yep.

It turns out that Harvey is also DeNiro's lawyer.

So what was dinner like, I ask Zenner.

"We were talking about when he made the movie 'Raging Bull'. It was quite the thing I had last night," he said with a laugh last Wednesday.

And what of Mr. DeNiro?

"He's a funny guy, man. He's quiet, but when he starts talking he doesn't shut up. But he's a nice, nice guy.

"They were telling me old stories about stuff that doesn't get printed up."

Okay, enough said on that subject, I thought. I really have no desire to know where Hoffa is buried. I figure my family is safer that way.

Anyway, best of luck to Daren. Here's hoping he can be a raging bull of his own Friday night.

Bezanson boxer to fight on ESPN2

WAYNE CHAMBERLAIN

Herald-Tribune sports writer

After months of waiting, Daren Zenner will finally get a crack at Arthur Williams.

And Canadians will get a chance to see the Bezanson brawler fight in this, his toughest match since he lost to reigning WBO champ Dariusz Michalczewski in Germany in December of 1997.

The Zenner-Williams tilt will be the feature bout on U.S. cable network ESPN2's weekly Friday Night Fights show in just two days time in Pensacola, Fla.

For local fight fans wanting to see the bout live, it means finding someone with a satellite dish or a sports bar that will televise it. The bell rings to start the fight at 7 p.m. EDT.

However, The Sports Network will rebroadcast the fight next week in Canada. According to TSN's Internet site, the bout will be shown Oct. 19 from 10 p.m. to midnight and again on Oct. 23 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Speaking from his apartment in the Bronx earlier this week, the excitement in Zenner's voice was unmistakable.

"It's been crazy around here," the 28-year-old said. "I've been calling Murad (Muhammad, Williams' promoter) every day for the past week-and-a-half trying to get the fight and I finally got it. A spot fell open. He goes: 'Do you want to fight Arthur on main event Friday night?'"

"I go: 'Well, it's a little soon, but sign me down.'"

Zenner said his health is fine and all questions about the wrist he broke during a fight in May of 1998 should be put to rest after his recent string of fights. Since the spring, the 190-plus pound boxer has knocked out three heavyweights.

However, they weren't of Williams' calibre.

At 37, Williams owns a 31-5-1 record with 23 KOs. He was the IBF cruiserweight champion until being knocked out by the current champ, Vassily Jirov, on June 5. Williams — whose nickname is 'King Arthur' — is an aggressive fighter with plenty of experience.

Zenner, meanwhile, comes in with a 24-3-2 record with 16 KOs. He is a former New York State super middleweight champion and has good punching power.

According to Zenner, Williams is worried about fac-

ing him. He said Muhammad and Williams didn't know he had been active this summer.

"They figured I hadn't fought since '97. So I sign the contract and I've got it all done up and Murad goes: 'When was your last fight? Was it the one in Germany?'"

"I go: 'No, I just fought a few weeks ago.'"

"He goes: 'What?'"

"I said: 'Yeah, I just fought a heavyweight a few weeks ago and I knocked him out in one round.'"

"He goes: 'How many fights have you had?'"

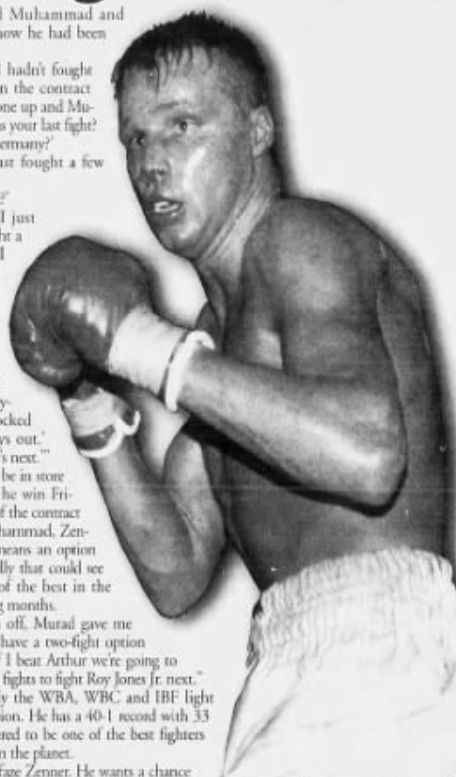
"I said: 'I had three fights, all heavyweights, and I knocked all three of the guys out.'"

Then I said, 'Arthur's next.'"

Big things could be in store for Zenner should he win Friday night. As part of the contract he signed with Muhammad, Zenner said a victory means an option kicks in automatically that could see him fighting one of the best in the world in the coming months.

"If I knock him off, Murad gave me his word — and I have a two-fight option with him — that if I beat Arthur we're going to negotiate one of the fights to fight Roy Jones Jr. next." Jones is currently the WBA, WBC and IBF light heavyweight champion. He has a 40-1 record with 33 KOs and is considered to be one of the best fighters pound-for-pound on the planet.

But that doesn't face Zenner. He wants a chance to get back into the game as a serious contender. "All I've got to do is knock Arthur Williams out in spectacular fashion and I'm going to get the fight probably within six months," he said.



Bezanson's Daren Zenner will take on Arthur Williams on ESPN2's Friday Night Fights in two days time.

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Tony Giberson/News Journal

Promoter Murad Muhammad tries to separate boxers Daren Zenner, left, and Arthur Williams at Wednesday's pre-fight news conference. The two fight Friday at Bayfront Auditorium.

Williams, Zenner deliver early jabs

Fighters trade words, shots in pre-fight intros

By Nathan Dominitz
Pensacola News Journal

There was a videotape of Pensacola's Arthur Williams fighting on five television screens behind the podium.

And here was Williams suddenly fighting with his next opponent, Daren Zenner, at the podium — an instance of

Arthur imitating Arthur.

The fighting isn't supposed to start for real until Friday, when former world cruiser-weight champion Williams battles former world contender Zenner in the main event at Bayfront Auditorium. The card, also featuring world-ranked junior light-weight Derrick Gainer of Pensacola, will be nationally televised on ESPN2.

The pre-fight fight, however real, began as a routine news conference Wednesday at Damon's Restaurant. Promoter

Murad Muhammad did his job promoting. The boxers said the usual pre-fight banter.

"I'm ready. I'm in tremendous shape," said Williams (31-5-1, 23 knockouts), who held the IBF 190-pound title earlier this year.

"It's a fight I've wanted," said Zenner (24-3-2, 16 KOs), a Canadian who has lived and trained for nine years in the Bronx, N.Y. "Nothing personal against Arthur. It's something I feel I need to go through to get to the champi-

onship."

Then it got personal between these men, who peacefully crossed paths while training in Las Vegas. Zenner noted that he was late for the news conference because he moved to a different hotel from where the boxing officials or Williams, who resides in Las Vegas, are staying. Standard procedure, as Muhammad noted, adding that this way Williams won't run into Zenner.

See PRE-FIGHT, 2D

Pensacola News Journal

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Pre-fight fight highlights news conference

FROM 1D

"There might be a fight before the fight," Williams said halfway under his breath but loud enough for Zenner to hear and accept the "challenge."

That's all it took for the 200-pounders to stand and Muhammad to be caught in between. Williams threw a wide, half-speed punch that caught the air and maybe a bit of Muhammad. "I hope you come (at me),"

Zenner yelled. "You think you can intimidate me?"

Light heavyweight Billy Lewis of Pensacola — and then middleweight Mark Lanton, a University of West Florida policeman — stepped in to keep them apart. That didn't prevent Williams from taking a slap at Zenner.

"I want you to do it again," Zenner said. "Let your hands do the talking, as tough as you are."

The inflammatory words were silenced and reason took over,

at least until Friday night, when they get paid for a scheduled 10-round.

"Now you see why I didn't put them together," Muhammad said of the hotel arrangements. "It's going to be a real fight. These fighters have a lot to lose, and a lot to gain."

Williams, 34, needs to win Friday to continue his rebound from his title loss in June to No. 1 contender Vassiliy Jirov. The native Pensacolian has a re-

match contracted with Jirov, possibly in 2000, but said he isn't looking past Zenner. He didn't expect to mix it up as soon as Wednesday, though.

"It's something that came up suddenly," Williams said. "I do take it a little personally. It's a serious fight. This guy's getting in my way. I'm not going to let him intimidate me."

Williams said he "caught himself" when he started to punch, telling himself to save it for the

fight."

"We were friends," he said. "We're not friends now."

Zenner, 28, said they were on good terms in Las Vegas.

"I think this is a front on Arthur Williams' part," Zenner said afterward. "He's a solid, good guy."

"If he feels he can intimidate me, he would be mistaken," he added. "He gave me a love tap. What the hell is that?"

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Photo provided

Bezanson fighter Daren Zenner looked lost in his nationally televised bout against Arthur Williams last Friday night, which he blames on a circus-like atmosphere in Pensacola, Fla. He lost the bout by unanimous decision, but did not get knocked down once.

Zenner determined to fight another day

WAYNE CHAMBERLAIN
Herald-Tribune sports writer

Right from the start of the Daren Zenner-Arthur Williams fight Friday night, you could tell something was amiss.

Zenner, a native of Bezanson, appeared distracted. He was on the defensive from the opening bell.

Speaking from his Bronx home Sunday night, Zenner said there was a lot more going on than what people watching the feature bout on U.S. cable sports network ESPN2 saw during the Friday Night Fights broadcast.

According to Zenner, the fight really started the day before when a brawl erupted at a pre-fight press conference. Apparently, Zenner took offence to something Williams said and called him on it. The next thing he knew, Zenner was exchanging punches with Williams and a group of his friends — the fight was held in Pensacola, Fla., Williams' home town.

Prior to the fight on Friday, Williams' posse and training staff kept taunting Zenner — a move which took him off his game. That was obvious during the fight because Williams, a former-IBF cruiserweight champion, threw punch after punch at the 28-year-old, while a stunned-looking Zenner threw hardly any.

Williams, 34, went on to win a unanimous 10-round decision that upped his record to 32-5-1 with 23 KOs. Zenner fell to 24-4-2 with 16 KOs.

"I took my eye off the ball," Zenner said of his distracted performance. "Shame on me. I'm a professional. I'm supposed to be able to control myself."

"These guys got into my head with all the outside (stuff) surrounding the fight. It had an impact because my eye wasn't on the ball."

Several local bars showed the fight live. Swan City fight fans were left to wonder why Williams landed more punches (339) than Zenner threw all night (334).

This is how he explained it: "What happens is Arthur is a little better than I thought he was. I couldn't catch him with that one shot. I got deeper in-

to a rut as the fight went on. And I'll tell you, man, it's very hard to get out of it.

"When you're in the middle of a rut and you're fighting a guy that is raining punches on you and you're trying to catch him with a punch and can't get the timing to do it . . . you're pretty much lost in there.

"Fighting at that level is all timing. You've got to have the timing and . . . when you fall into a rut where you're looking to land one punch to knock him out and it don't come — it's a scary situation.

"The only thing you can do is take the punishment, be a man and accept an ass kicking."

This was Zenner's fourth fight this year after an 18-month layoff forced by a broken bone in his right wrist suffered in 1997. He reported no problems with his hand.

He did, however, suffer a large cut over his left eye during the bout.

As for his future, Zenner is still a young fighter. Most of the top cruiserweight boxers are in their early- to mid-30s.

He intends to fight again in December and January. They'll likely be against run-of-the-mill boxers. However, he has hopes of a title shot for the future.

Zenner claims the manager for current WBO cruiserweight champ Johnny Nelson inquired about a bout over the summer, but he turned him down because it was with only a week's notice. Nelson, 32, is a British fighter who currently sports a 34-12-1 record with 19 KOs.

For the next few months, Zenner intends to work the phones in the hopes of lining up more high profile matches. Despite the loss, he thinks the Williams fight will help secure more bouts.

"You've got a white guy in there who can take punishment like crazy and still be in front of your face," he said. "But the (next fighters) are going to get a version that will come and let his hands go and not get caught up in all the bull that surrounds (a fight)."

Bezanson-turned-Bronx boxer on the rebound

WAYNE CHAMBERLAIN
Herald-Tribune sports

The past six months have seen many changes in Daren Zenner's life.

Since an embarrassing loss to former IBF cruiserweight champion Arthur Williams last October, the Bezanson-turned-Bronx boxer and his wife, Roxanne, welcomed their third daughter, Christy Bella, into the world two months ago.

The 28-year-old also admitted he needed to change his approach to boxing if he was going to regain the form that saw him ranked the No. 2 light heavyweight by the WBO.

On the advice of ESPN Friday Night Fights analyst — and former-Mike Tyson trainer — Teddy Atlas, Zenner switched trainers. He is now trained by former-Lennox Lewis handler Johnny Davenport.

"It's been a nice change," Zenner said from his Bronx home, adding

he has to commute to Queens to do his training now.

"He's like a drill sergeant. It's something I needed in my career.

"At the time I fought Arthur, not only did I rush into the fight on eight days notice, but I had a guy working with me at the time and I was basically telling him how to train me."

That is not the case with Davenport, whom Zenner said put him in his place.

"I realized if I was going to go any further — I want to win a world title before I retire — I needed better training.

"It's like training horses. If you just train a horse to run, it'll run all day long. But if you get a good trainer who knows the ins and outs, the horse with the quality trainer is going to win every time pretty much.

"You just can't have somebody there with a towel telling you to 'Do this' and 'do this.'"

In the Williams fight, Zenner threw fewer punches (334) than the former champion landed (339). He went most of the fight looking to take Williams out with one punch, but could never set him up properly.

Fixing that is where Davenport comes in.

"He's got me fighting more at an angle and looking to find spots instead of just going in there and throwing punches," Zenner said. "He's (teaching me to about) setting a guy up, taking my time and working off a good stiff jab.

"He's really got me back down to basics.

"It's a thing now of reaching into the talent I have and bringing it out."

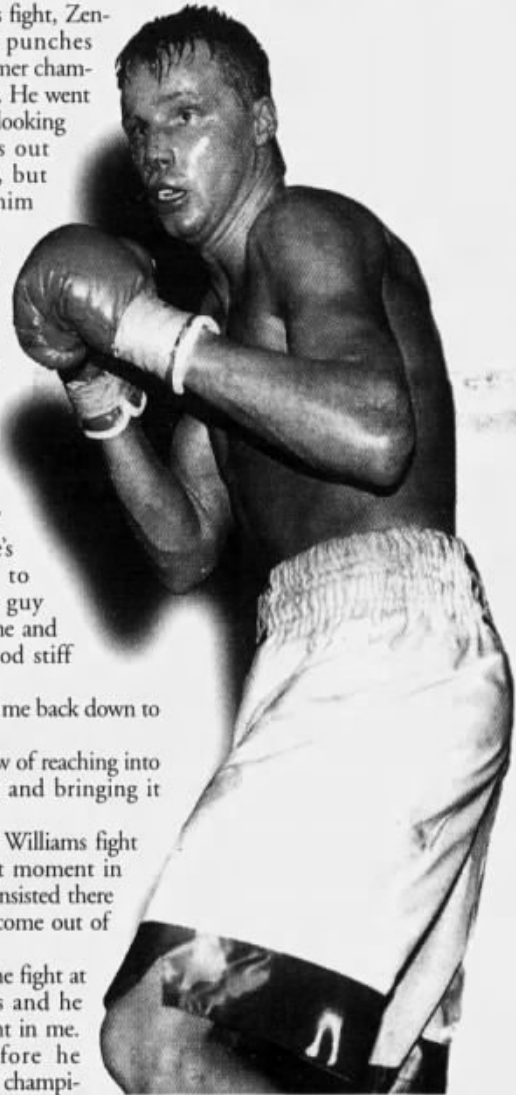
And while the Williams fight was not his finest moment in the ring, Zenner insisted there were positives to come out of it.

"They threw the fight at me in eight days and he couldn't put a dent in me. Six months before he fought me he was champion of the world. I lost to him, but he couldn't do nothing with me. There was no quit in my heart."

Since October, Zenner has had two minor bouts. He scored a first-round knockout over one in Virginia Beach last week and a third-round knockout over another this past January in Tennessee.

His record currently stands at 26-4-2 with 18 KOs.

As for the future, Zenner hopes to work his way back to another title shot in the cruiserweight divi-



DHT file photo

Daren Zenner went from Bezanson to the Bronx with his boxing skills and is on the comeback trail at age 28.

sion.

"The whole thing with me now is consistency," he said. "It's not being great, but just being consistently good every day. My heart and desire has always been there, it's just somebody to be on top of me and bring the talent out."