

Razor sharp!

WHEN Michael Spinks and Gerry Cooney attempt to be recognised as the "People's Heavyweight Champion of the World" in Atlantic City on Monday, Donovan "Razor" Ruddock will as the chief support try to reinforce his claim to a crack at Mike Tyson.

Ruddock, currently ranked 10 by the WBC is a native of Jamaica whose family, including five children, moved to Ontario, Canada, when he was 11-years-old. Coming to the game at 16, Ruddock won two Canadian amateur titles with only 17 bouts and two years experience.

After winning his first five professional fights Ruddock was held to a draw by Phillip Brown in a mediocre performance.

Four following victories were marred in April 1985 by an asthmatic relapse in round nine against David Jaco. While ahead on the judges' cards Ruddock was forced to withdraw and suffer his only professional defeat.

After extensive medical treatment, Razor is certain that the asthmatic problems are now behind him.

Various changes in management have not hindered Ruddock. Initially under the guidance of former Canadian heavyweight contender George Chuvalo and then for a brief spell with Norman Henry, Razor is now managed by Los Angeles based Art Miles, who after seeing this heavyweight prospect perform quit a lucrative commercial position.

Miles has moved Ruddock from Canada to Westwood Village in Los Angeles to train alongside Olympian Henry Tillman and title hopefuls Young Dick Tiger and Hector Lopez at the Broadway Gym in South-Central Los Angeles.

Being a passionate and patriotic Canadian, Ruddock dreams of one day winning the Canadian heavyweight crown but is presently disillusioned with his domestic heavyweight scene following the recent losses of Trevor Berbick, Ken Lakusta and Willie de Wit. Consequently Ruddock's sights and priorities have gradually shifted towards a world, rather than a Canadian, heavyweight crown.

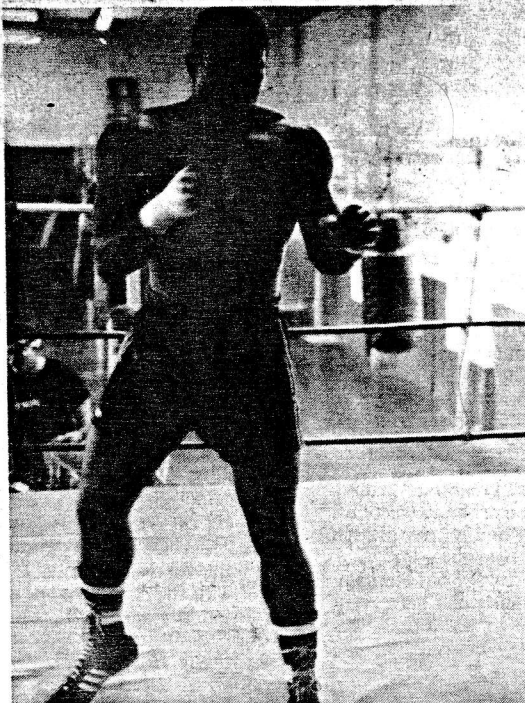
British fight fans should be familiar with Ruddock due to his encounter with former European heavyweight contender John Westgarth in May 1986 on a Frank Warren promotion at Muswell Hill, Ruddock knocking Westgarth out in the seventh.

He had taken the fight at 24 hours notice. He flew non-stop from Canada, sleeping only one hour above the Thomas à Beckett Gym prior to fight time.

Ruddock explained, "By the seventh round I felt my muscles stiffening like lead piping and knew I had to finish the fight."

In Fayetteville, North Carolina last August Ruddock's first name opponent came in the Herculean shape of Mike Weaver. The double-headed card, also including James "Bonecrusher" Smith and David Bey, was Ruddock's US and television debut.

The former WBA heavyweight champion, full of confidence after his crushing victory over Carl "The



A CONTENDER who can fight and look the part, too.

Despite weighing 10 pounds lighter than he did against Biggs, Evans found Ruddock far more trouble than the Olympic champion. After dominating the opening rounds with the characteristic left jab Ruddock unleashed an array of left hooks, straight rights and right uppercuts to dispose of Evans 58 seconds into the fifth round of a scheduled 10-round.

Whilst impressing the estimated 1,000 crowd in attendance Ruddock also excited his manager-trainer Art Miles, "What impressed me most was the assortment of punches he threw," Miles later commented.

The most striking characteristic of any well conditioned heavyweight is the physical enormity coupled with an athletic stature, features that make a healthy heavyweight division the most compelling. Razor Ruddock is no exception.

At 6 feet 2 inches, 220 pound and with a 82 inch reach Ruddock's well defined body possesses the speed and fluidity of a middleweight. Razor's willingness to listen and learn are factors that impress Art Miles, "I've never seen a fighter work and train with such passion."

Indeed Ruddock's dedication to fighting for and winning the heavyweight championship of the world is not only an obsession but also a distinct possibility.

While patiently working behind an effective left jab, which is quicker and less predictable than Frank Bruno's, Ruddock is equipped with power in both hands whether it be with hooks to the head and body or with short straight punches. His combinations are thrown fluidly and confidently and Razor possesses enough ring savvy to frustrate and defuse big-punchers like Mike Weaver.

What in fact makes the gradual ascendancy of Ruddock through the heavyweight ratings significant is the current heavyweight situation.

With such an abundance of top ten heavyweights falling or ready to fall by the wayside the developing situation is conducive to Ruddock who has both the time and patience to wait in line.

In the light of Ruddock's last two impressive outings against respected opposition and the proposed televised victory on Monday the Razor will edge towards a title showdown. Following the Evans victory Ruddock assessed this stage of his career, "I'm in a launching position — I'm only 23 and I've had a total of 32 fights, amateur and pro. This is a tough game and I have a lot to learn, but I feel I'm getting there."

When a possible title shot at Tyson is mentioned Ruddock is enthusiastic and confident; Art Miles is profound and confident. When the Razor Ruddock package is experienced such confidence is contagious

Ruddock joins the queue for Tyson

By ROBERT HARDING and ANTHONY SHEPHERD

Truth" Williams entered the bout as a clear favourite to quickly dispose of the relatively unknown Canadian journeyman. Throughout the first three rounds Ruddock consistently kept Weaver off balance with lightning left jabs and crisp combinations.

However, in round four, displaying a lack of experience Ruddock dropped his right hand and was caught flush with Weaver's famed left hook. Momentarily hurt, but still in control of his senses Ruddock remained on his toes and continued to dominate Weaver for the rest of the fight with versatility, accuracy and superior hand and foot speed.

A split ten-round decision in favour of Ruddock belied his utter dominance of Weaver. Prior to the Weaver victory Larry Holmes had expressed reservations concerning Razor's chin. Weaver's left hook certainly put that fear to rest.

Ruddock had in fact been hired by Holmes as a sparring partner for the rematch with Michael Spinks. Due to Razor's swiftness he was considered to be surplus to requirements by the Holmes camp.

George Chuvalo remembers "Razor boxed Larry's fanny off. He was just too fast for Larry. It was a good experience, but we got fired because Larry couldn't handle Razor's speed."

The Holmes episode fuelled rumours about Ruddock within the heavyweight division; the victory over Weaver confirmed them.

Larry Holmes's admiration for Ruddock in his new role of fight promoter convinced him to invite Razor to Easton, Pennsylvania, to highlight a seven-bout card at Easton's State Theatre. Here he met perennial journeyman Robbie Evans, who despite a 9-10 record and a poor showing against Tyrell Biggs on the Christie-Mannion undercard at Muswell Hill is fairly well respected in American heavyweight circles.

Evans, who has fought several other highly ranked heavyweights including Tony Tucker, James Broad and Eddie Gregg, is currently employed as a sparring partner for Gerry Cooney and was thought to be an ideal tune-up for Razor's Atlantic City date.