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KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, July 1 (Tuesday) — Heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali easily outpointed British challenger Joe Bugner today to retain his title in a 15-round fight under a hot equatorial sun. There were no knockdowns and neither boxer ever appeared in serious trouble.

But Ali was the constant aggressor and dominated the contest. Bugner, who fought a largely defensive fight throughout, won no more than two or three rounds.

Before the fight, Ali, not unexpectedly, said he was not going through with his announced retirement. Instead, he would fight Joe Frazier a third time—likely in October in Manila.

Both fighters weathered the punishing heat and Ali seemed as strong in the last round as he did in the first. Ali seemed contemptuous of Bugner's punching power—exposing his chin and taunting Bugner to come to him. Bugner rarely took the bait and, except for a few right hooks, seemed to depend entirely on his left jab.

Bugner's finest hour came in the 10th and 12th rounds when he opened up on Ali and temporarily became the aggressor. But except for those brief examples, Ali managed the fight like a dancing master, keeping Bugner where he wanted him. There was never any question Ali was winning.

The Merdeka Stadium was three-quarters empty due to the fact that, at the last minute, the government announced that the fight would be shown live on local television. Don King, the New York promoter, shook his head in disappointment, but in Malaysia, where few people can afford even the cheapest tickets, the TV broadcast was politically necessary.

With heavy security forces in and around the stadium, discounting press, local bands and VIP's, there could not have been more than 5 or 6,000 paying customers.

Bugner, who weighed 230, lost for the seventh time against 51 victories and a draw. The loss does not affect his status as the European champion.

The fight, for which Ali got \$2 million to \$500,000 for Bugner, was the final third of a closed-circuit television tripleheader.

Occasionally Bugner would lunge at Ali and drive him onto the ropes. But Ali always was able to cover up and move out of trouble quickly. Bugner, on the other hand, was unable to keep Ali's quick



jabbs and hooks from getting through his guard as Ali quickly won round after round.

Often in the early rounds Ali would stand up in his corner during the one-minute rest period between rounds. Just before the last round he strode over to chat with Frazier at ringside.

Bugner started the fight as he said he would by letting Ali be the aggressor, hoping to wear the champion out in the heat but in the end the heat seemed to affect Bugner more than Ali, even though at 25 Bugner is eight years younger than the champion.

After the fight, Bugner told reporters that the heat and humidity "were just too much for me. The climate beat me," he said. "I couldn't find the burst of energy I needed after the 10th round to win the fight."

Ali dismissed the climate by saying that the conditions were the same for both fighters, but he gave Bugner high praise and said that one day he would be the champion of the world. Ali said he was unable to hurt Bugner, which was a surprise to the champ, and he found Bugner a far stronger and better fighter than when the two last met in Las Vegas in 1973. But despite Ali's kind words it was really never a contest. In their previous fight Ali also won a decision.

"Well, gentlemen, I tried," Bugner continued. "I still feel confident that I will win the title, but I just didn't have it this time."

Bugner, 25, looked surprisingly fit after the match. He had a swelling under his right eye and appeared flushed, but otherwise in good condition.

Andy Smith, Bugner's manager, said the European champion lost between 10 and 12 rounds.

"I tried to use moving tactics for the first eight rounds and then step up the pace," said Bugner. Bugner relied heavily on his left jab. When newsmen noted that he seemed to neglect his right hand, Bugner said "Unfortunately, yes."

Bugner said Ali talked to him steadily, taunting him. "He kept saying to me, 'You got you.' I would keep saying to him, 'No you haven't, baby.'"

Bugner said Ali's experience gave him the edge, "but things should be different next time."

"If I quit, people will say that Joe Frazier would have whipped me," Ali said after the fight. They would say that George Foreman and Ken Norton would, too. So when he retires, I don't want anybody around who people might think would beat me."

King said the third Ali-Frazier fight, set for Oct. 1 for a reported \$12 million, had already been signed and the only stumbling blocks were Ali's announced retirement and Bugner.

Ali, dressed in a white terrycloth robe, came out of his dressing room behind a phalanx of Malaysian police and spoke to reporters in a hoarse voice. Ali, who had hinted at retirement eight days previously, said he would now fight Frazier, Ken Norton and George Foreman—and that none of them was as good as Bugner.

Ali came out of the fight in good condition and Angelo Dundee, his trainer, said that all the fighter got was a slight cut over his left eye. "It didn't need nothing, no cut medicine, just a few kisses," Dundee said.

A communication specialist at ringside said the heat was at least 103 degrees in the ring, and there was the strength-sapping tropical humidity.

Outside the stadium, several thousand fans chanted "Ali, Ali, Ali."

"Ali is the people's champ," said one admirer.