

Bugner Was Harder to Beat Than Frazier, Observes Ali

Bugner fought a largely defensive fight. His strategy was to conserve energy in the early rounds and beat Ali late in the fight. But in the end Ali was faster, stronger and in better condition. By the ninth round, Bugner found he had no strength with which to put on a burst of energy, he said after the fight.

The referee and one of the judges gave Bugner two rounds and one judge gave him three. But there was never any doubt in anyone's mind that Ali was winning the fight from the first bell.

The Malaysians had never

seen anything quite like Ali. He was the overwhelming favorite and toward the end was saying that the fight was a "holy war" and that the honor of Islam was at stake. That caused some of the non-Muslim Chinese and Indians in this racially divided country to root for Bugner.

Security forces were worried that if Ali should lose, the Muslims might riot and all police and army leaves were canceled. Malaysia is about 45 per cent Muslim and 34 per cent Chinese. The rest are mostly Indians and Pakistanis.

Yet the irrepressible Ali never seemed to be aware of the intrigues and rivalries of this region. Today at his press conference he

spoke about how it was for him fighting in a Muslim country and all the support that he would get from the Muslim multitudes in Manila.

When it was pointed out to him that Manila is overwhelmingly Roman Catholic and not Muslim, Ali seemed confused and no one had the heart to tell him that the Philippines is now engaged in a bitter civil war to suppress Muslim secessionists in the South.

"After all," as one Malaysian said, "when you are the heavyweight champion of the world you don't have to pay attention to politics."

