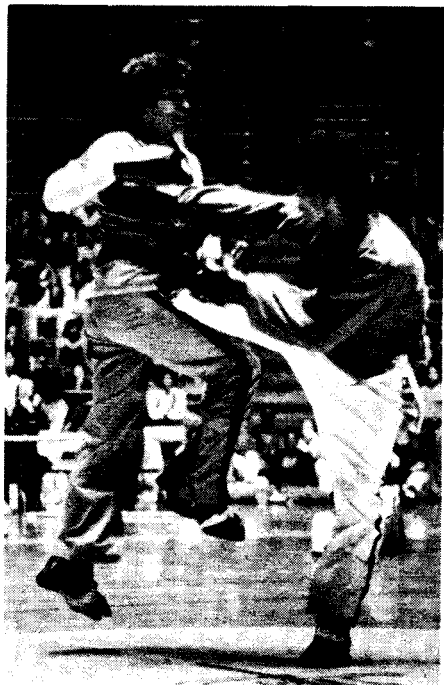


Always experimenting and preferring almost any way of preventing his opponent's points to actually blocking them, Vitali below jams a kick and prepares a reverse punch. At far right, a pretty kick that got away.



to get the point. In other cases, a lightweight can just jump in there with a round kick that misses by three feet but gets the point for being inside the other guy's block. With equipment, no matter how big your opponent is, you've got to go up there and stick him hard before you'll get the point.

What about the charge that you are a runner?

Take for example, my fight with Eddie Newman. He ran at me continuously. I would dodge, circle, and retreat when I needed to. But I kept my composure. When Newman, for instance made his final surges, I would hit him with a jump away side kick. Now, when I fought McCallum, I ran like hell from McCallum. He was so aggressive and such a good fighter. But basically, I don't run. I circle, throw angular techniques, and try to frustrate my opponents. I'll make you frustrated to the point where you might think I'm running because, ordinarily, I don't block techniques with my hands and arms. I refuse to block and counter. I'm the type of fighter who is going to try to move away from you at an angle. It's something that I picked up from Joe Lewis years ago, and it's something I consider truly modern karate. Half the world doesn't understand what is meant by angular kicks yet. But now, all these guys like Al Francis, he's changed. All these guys were prehistoric fighters a couple of years ago, but now, all of a sudden, they're using sweeps and throwing beautifully deceptive techniques. Most people still haven't gotten the message that you don't have to manhandle a foot, get all bruised up, and try to overpower your opponent. When I'm fighting a cagey fighter, I will move and move and move and wait. Once I get you leaning, I'll nail you. I didn't have to run from Fisher because I knew what I had to do to beat him. If a guy is larger and I think I'd better run, then, within limits, I'll run; but by the same token, I'll score more points against him than any other fighter will. McCallum's the

same way. He beats guys 10 to 0. But I ran up a score against McCallum, beating him 7 to 4. And I don't think anybody else in the country can say that.

Who has influenced the way you fight?

Well, years ago when I was just starting out, I actually studied the ways guys like Wallace and Lewis fought. I'd go to a seminar or something and listen. And if they said do this or that, then I'd go home and try it. I just believed it. So like this angular movement bit. When a guy kicks you, instead of blocking him with your hands, just step aside and you're still close enough to hit your man. God knows, it's frustrating. I fight people like that sometimes and it gets me so frustrated I just say, "Will you stand still for a second so I can hit you."

At the Battle of Atlanta last year somebody threw a technique at you and it looked close. Before a point could be called for, you tapped your shoulder. Is that a matter of gamesmanship?

I very rarely get into that at all. There are some people who have become almost experts at it. If a guy hits me I'll usually acknowledge it. If the judge asked me, I'd say, "Yes, sure, he hit me, look at my head." But in a case like that Harris fight where his round kick hit first my shoulder and just came up toward my head, then maybe I'd point to my shoulder to kind of reinforce what I would hope the judges thought they'd seen. Other people take advantage of that. But I very seldom argue a point. The only time I can remember doing that was in the Mid-Americas against Anderson when I really thought I was beating him. But usually, I'm like McCallum. My attitude is, yeah, well, he got the point. Hurry up and give it to him so I can come and get it back. I like that time when we're actually out there fighting, because I can use it to build the pressure, and people can't take that, for the most part.

What else do you do to disrupt the offenses of opponents?