

## The Great White



# Nope?

Paul Nave, a polite, well-spoken product of upscale Marin County, has climbed out of boxing obscurity to fight for a world title.

He's trained and eager and he's probably going to get his ass kicked.

By Jack Boulware

**Stage: A report on the crisis at Brady Street Dance**



**Music:**  
Jesus  
rocks --  
doesn't He?

**Dog Bites: We**  
win too many  
awards to fit in  
this box!

**Art and**  
Exorcism:  
Sragow on  
*Mean Streets*





# Great White Nope?

Paul Nave, a polite, well-spoken product of upscale Marin County, has climbed out of boxing obscurity to fight for a world title.

He's a polished fighter, but he's probably going to get his ass kicked.

By Jack Boulware

**R**uben "Butcher Boy" Hernandez slides his broad bulk onto a stool, plops his hands on the bar, leans back, and bellows his best imitation of a California sea lion:

"ARRRRRRROOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!"

The 68-year-old former welterweight from North Beach orders a drink and spins around to greet another old boxer. He doesn't have to look far. Today, the Silver Moon bar in Daly City is packed with old fighters, pug-nosed, gnarl-knuckled survivors from

the last 50 years of boxing in the Bay Area, hard-bitten characters, one and all.

Hall of Famer Johnny Gonzalves. Lyle Mackin. Mongo "The Rock" Luciano. The third Friday of every month, any boxer who can still bend his limbs ducks out on the wife and kids and limps down here for the meeting of the Round House Boys. Within walls papered with fight posters and photos from times when ring attire resembled winter mittens and Speedo swimsuits, the old fighters exchange a steady stream of friendly epi-

thets and raunchy jokes between shots of booze and mouthfuls of cold cuts. Above the cash register hangs a blown-up image of Sugar Ray Robinson making hamburger of Jersey Joe Walcott's face; next to it, a promo shot of Rocky Marciano from a 1950s bout at the Civic Center.

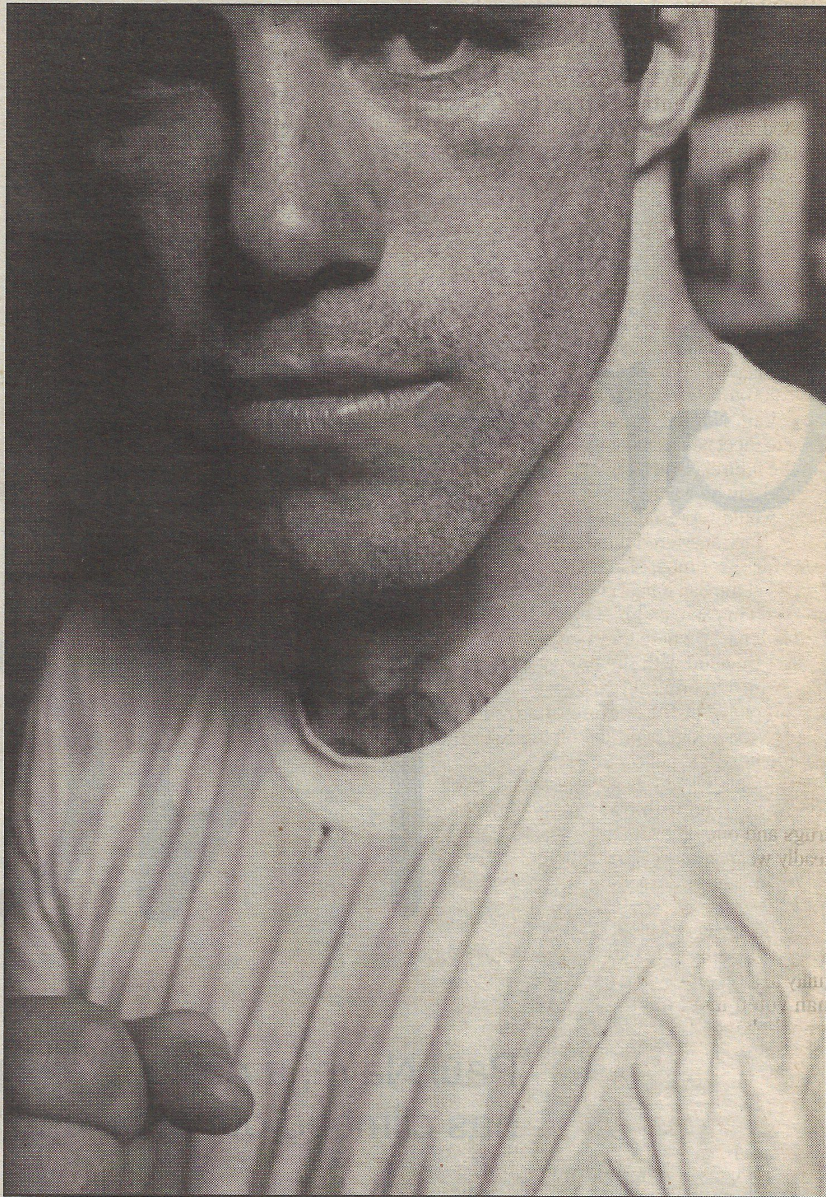
In postwar San Francisco, every neighborhood had its own boxing gym, and the bouts were entertainment for the masses. Big fights saw mayors and governors sitting ringside in tuxedos. Most of the guys here at

the Silver Moon boxed the Bay Area circuit for little or no money, some fighting three times a night at long-closed venues — the old Dreamland in the Fillmore, or the National Hall down at 16th and Mission, nicknamed the "Bucket of Blood." But that was then, and now the aging crowd grows more boisterous, shouting for drinks, slurring into one another's occasionally cauliflowered ears.

A bell clangs behind the bar, and Al Ilardi

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Nave takes a break from sparring.

## Nave

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calls the meeting to order — "Brothers, let's get ready to rumble!" — and starts to make announcements. But he can't read his notes, and reaches for his glasses. "I want my money back," hollers someone over the noise. Ilardi adjusts his specs, and informs the mob of a new inductee into the club — Marin real estate agent Andy Nance, a four-time Golden Gloves champion who boxed pro for six years, and was once rated No. 2 in the world. The crowd roars approval. They've all seen him fight. He was the Great White Hope of the Bay Area, just before the 1980s heyday of "Irish" Pat Lawlor.

The bell rings again, and Ilardi announces that on March 27, another Marin fighter, Paul Nave, will duke it out for the World Boxing Federation world welterweight championship, which currently stands vacant. His opponent will be three-time world champ Greg Haugen, who's fought and beaten the best.

The 37-year-old Nave (pronounced NAW-vay) stands in the doorway, smiling politely. Although currently ranked No. 1 in the world by the WBF (Haugen is ranked No. 2), he appears small, young in comparison to the oldsters. Ilardi cracks a joke, and then asks Nave if he's got any words on his upcoming fight.

The crowd quiets. "I'm gonna knock him out," grins Nave.

There is a pause. It is not a long silence, just one microsecond of hush too long. Then, sud-

denly, the Round House Boys burst into cheers, fists pumping in the air.

The delay in demonstrated enthusiasm might be attributed to many things. Alcoholic stupor. The slowing reflexes of the elderly. Perhaps even boxing dementia. But one factor almost certainly contributed to the short but meaningful time between Nave's announcement, and the response to it.

Privately, almost nobody in the Silver Moon thinks Paul Nave has a chance.

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Paul Nave has encountered tough opponents in the ring during his time, but none with as sneaky a punch as Daryl Napier.

Napier wasn't a boxer. He was a law student and musician who dealt cocaine in the small-town bars of Marin County, and although not under arrest or suspicion, he wanted to extricate himself from the underworld. He approached the San Rafael police and offered to help them nail one of the many suspected coke dealers in Marin. Several names came up, and one stuck out in particular: Paul Nave.

Napier told police he knew Nave only in passing. They hung out at the same bars — Baxter's in Sausalito, TKO's in Harbor Center. But Nave, scion of an influential business family and son of a former city councilman, made an attractive target. Police agreed to the deal, and set Napier up with a wire.

And on July 18, 1989, Paul Nave's life changed significantly.



The phone rang at one of the family businesses, Nave Limousine. Napier was on the line, and after dropping the names of mutual friends, asked Nave about coke. Nave was wary; a few months earlier he'd been arrested after a drug deal and charged with two counts of sale and transportation of narcotics. He told Napier he didn't need the risk of a cocaine deal, but the aspiring lawyer Napier was persuasive, claiming he had just gotten out of jail himself.

Two days later, the pair met in the parking lot of the Belli-Deli in San Rafael. According to court documents, Nave got in Napier's Porsche and told him to drive around awhile. They pulled up at a stop sign and did the deal — \$1,000 for an ounce of blow in a brown paper bag. Napier dropped Nave off, then drove to meet police and gave them the goods.

In the future, Napier would call the limo service and say he wanted to "rent a limo." Each "limo" would represent an ounce of blow. On July 24 Nave answered the phone and took an order for "six limos." Later that day, Napier stopped at the San Rafael police station, picked up \$6,000 in cash, and met Nave at a Burger King in Ignacio, where they negotiated price.

Nave drove off with the money to count it, then returned and told Napier 6 ounces of cocaine were at the bottom of a tree on a frontage road. Napier picked up the coke and brought it back to police.

In October, Nave was again arrested. In all, he was charged with five counts of dealing drugs and one other offense, possession of a deadly weapon (a sawed-off shotgun found at the limo business during the prior arrest). The local headlines were not pretty: "Ex-councilman's son arraigned in drug case."

After a lengthy fight in the courts, Nave pled guilty to all charges. And on June 25, 1990, the man voted most likely to succeed in high school changed his mailing address to San Quentin prison, where he was sentenced to sit in a cell for the next six years of his life.

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How Paul Nave became a boxer, and a convicted felon, and a boxer contending for a world title is a story so laced with the ups and downs of success, failure, and survival that had it not actually occurred, it would be necessary for cable TV to invent it.

Paul Nave's great-grandfather immigrated to San Francisco in the 1880s from a small town outside Genoa, long a trading center for the business and industry of northern Italy. The hustle always seemed to be in the Nave genes, and it's still there today. On the site of Pietro Nave's original vegetable garden in Novato now stands the Nave Shopping Center, a large strip of storefronts including a post office, a Thrifty, and a separate annex across the street, owned by Pietro's descendants. A short distance away is the Nave Lanes bowling alley. Nave Drive is one of the oldest streets in Novato.

The sixth of eight athletic children, Paul Nave learned a few basic fighting moves from his father, who boxed in college, but his interests leaned more toward football and wrestling; in fact, he won the county league wrestling championship three times. But during junior high school, he began spending hours after classes at the home of Jack MacPhee, a local boxing enthusiast and owner of a plumbing supply company.

The basement of MacPhee's home constituted the only boxing gym in the area. Later, his plumbing warehouse provided the same service. Once a boxer himself, MacPhee, like many a boxing trainer, was a father figure for the kids he taught.

"If you could do 100 sit-ups with a 10-pound

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## Nave

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weight behind your head," says Nave, "he'd give you a banana split."

Along with his buddies Andy Nance and Peter Howes, Nave learned how to throw basic punches, and when MacPhee took the boys to participate in weekend "fight nights" at local boys clubs, Nave shone.

In his midteens, Nave entered the local Golden Gloves competition at San Francisco Civic Center — back then, in the late 1970s, it was sponsored by the *San Francisco Examiner* — and won in the 119-pound weight class. He participated in local "smokers," where young fighters pair up based on weight and slug it out for three two-minute rounds. He won those too, beating guys who supposedly trained year-round, even though Nave didn't. Then he won the Golden Gloves again.

But there was money to be made, and Paul had the Nave business head. He worked during high school, driving produce delivery trucks to Bay Area restaurants and bars. He spent one semester at San Francisco State University, studying business and joining the wrestling team. But what was the point of commuting twice a day to learn about business, when he was already making \$500 a week with the Teamsters?

Nave continued to work and fight, winning some 30 amateur bouts, before turning professional in 1985. During his early pro career, he knocked out so many opponents in the first round that a Petaluma sportswriter dubbed him the "Marin County Assassin."

As his boxing career grew, so did his business interests. In 1984 he purchased a beat-up Cadillac and started Nave Limousine Service, which would swell to a fleet of nine cars and 30 drivers. Eventually, he drove a Mercedes convertible, owned and flew his own Piper Archer four-seater airplane, and dabbled in the lucrative local real estate market.

More money meant a faster lifestyle — especially fast in Marin, one of the most affluent counties in the nation. Nave says he never blinked at running up \$100,000 on credit cards, expanding his businesses, and gambling on football, basketball, or whatever other sport was on television.

What Nave didn't lose gambling went straight up his nose. Coke was the 1980s drug of choice, and eventually, the evil powder took over every aspect of Nave's life. By the end of the decade, divorced and with a small daughter, he was paying off his debts by dealing ounces of cocaine.

"It was a crazy life," he says, shaking his head. "Flying around everywhere, and the limousine service, and partying all the time, the boxing, trying to develop property.

"I had a million things going at once."

Then he was in prison, with nothing going for him at all.

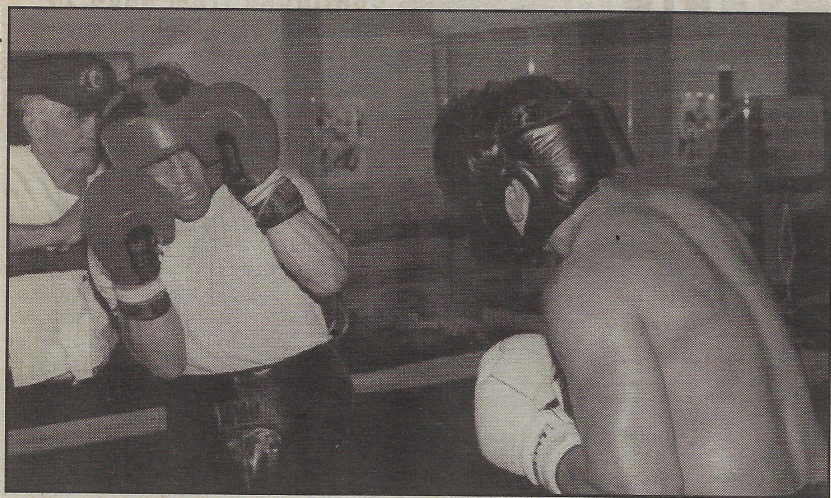
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After a couple of months in San Quentin, Nave began to work out regularly, took a job as a clerk, and wrote lots of letters. But in the joint, there are no rules, no right and wrong.

"You try to keep a positive head, and do everything you can to think of your future, but it's just time that's lost," he says. "That's one thing about freedom. Nobody knows what it's like until you've lost it. You can never back down in prison. You're worse for backing down."

Nave says he came close to getting in fights, but had to suppress his fighter's instinct; too often, fighting led to guard brutality, lockdowns, lengthened sentences, and loss of privileges. There was no real friendship, either. Nave couldn't talk to the guards too much, for fear of being labeled a snitch, and he couldn't





Trainer Harold DeRouen, Nave, and Tony "The Tiger" Lopez work out in Reno.

talk to the inmates much, for fear of getting sucked into the prison gang hierarchy. He bottled it all in, and waited for his friend Andy Nance, who visited three nights a week to help Nave train for a boxing match that might happen someday.

Maybe.

In 1991, the state Department of Corrections allowed Nave to leave San Quentin for a day to box in Petaluma. If he won, he agreed, he would donate his \$1,000 purse to charity.

The fight was a real scene. Prison guards escorted Nave to and from the Petaluma Veterans Memorial Building. Nave's corner assistants — which included legendary San Francisco trainer Sonny Marson — all wore black-and-white-striped prison garb. Nave didn't just win; he knocked out his opponent in the first round.

But Nave was getting older, and he was sick of prison officials reminding him of it. "You're 30 now," they would taunt. "You'll never box when you get out of here." One said loud enough for him to hear, "He's a good boxer, but he'll never fight for a world title."

Nave was released from San Quentin in July 1993, his six-year sentence reduced to three because of good behavior. The limo service was out of business. The airplane, houses, cars were all liquidated. The party was over. At the age of 32, Paul Nave moved back in with his parents. All he had left was boxing.

Once out of prison, Nave worked the phones, booking himself on fight cards around the Bay Area. Unlike most pro fighters, Nave has never taken on a manager, preferring to save the 33 percent fee and do it alone.

#### **WBF World Welterweight Title**

**Paul Nave vs. Greg Haugen**

**Televised live on ESPN-2**

**Ring announcer: Mr. T**

**Special guest:**

**Marla Maples Trump**

**Friday, March 27,**

**San Rafael, Calif.**

**Doors open at 5:30 p.m.,**

**fight starts at 6:30 p.m.**

**Tickets: \$25-150**

**BASS: (510) 762-2277**

**Marin Veterans Memorial**

**Auditorium: 472-3500**

**Howes Entertainment Inc.: 922-7391**

He moved back up the ladder, starting with the four- and five-round bouts that paid a couple hundred bucks. His presence in the ring evolved into a flashy show; the Italian flag's colors were on his trunks and the shirts of his corner men.

His fighting style changed, too. He had been a brawler in the past, swinging for the knockout right out of the gate. But that headhunting is a young man's game, and it saps energy that's useful in the later rounds.

"As you get a little older, you figure out, 'Let's have some fun, take some punches, give 'em.' If you can outbox a guy, that's what you want to do," he says. "I've always been quick, but I've been more of a puncher. I've developed into a boxer-puncher."

Five years and two broken noses later, his pro record stands at 15 wins, five losses, and two draws, with eight knockouts, and along the way he's picked up four regional titles.

The Haugen fight is Nave's first shot at a world title, and although there are several boxing organizations that sanction "world title" status, the WBF is well-respected. A win would mean a hefty cash purse, prestige, and the chance to fight for even more money.

But almost nobody gives Nave very much chance of winning. He's fighting Greg Haugen.

Nave's four belts gleam to the cameras on the dais at a February press conference in a San Rafael hotel. He sits behind them, sharply dressed and with his hair gelled in place.

Greg Haugen, unshaven and in a T-shirt and baseball cap, looks at Nave with a scowl.

"He says he's won four titles," Haugen, a three-time world champion, snarls. "I've never heard of any of 'em."

The crowd chuckles. Nave smiles but doesn't say anything. Haugen, who had an opponent cancel on him recently, is wound up like a spring. But there's a reason, besides the wasted training, for his sour mood.

Sour's the way Haugen is.

Paul Nave and Greg Haugen are both 5 foot 8, 146 pounds, and 37 years old. Both are divorced with children, and both live with their parents.

All similarities end there.

If Paul Nave comes off as the quintessential self-actualized California nice guy, Greg Haugen appears to have exactly the opposite personality — he's a mean little son of a bitch who could kick the crap out of someone twice his size.

Haugen's official record is 37-7-2, but that doesn't count his amateur bouts. Before turning pro, Greg Haugen fought an incredible 300 fights, many of them nasty "tough man" competitions in Alaska bars, where the winner

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Nave gets his name tag adjusted by promoter Peter Howes.

## Nave

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beats up three or four guys and walks out with beer money. Haugen has been pounding on people since he was old enough to walk. He knows little else.

Haugen has won three world titles and fought a who's who of boxers while making — and losing — an estimated \$7 million in the ring. He won his title belts by beating IBF world champions Jimmy Paul and Vinny Pazienza, and Hector "Macho" Camacho, a boxing legend who at the time was undefeated, with 38 wins. Haugen's also knocked out the popular Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini, and lost his IBF title to world-class fighter Pernell Whitaker in a brutal 12-round decision.

In 1993, still smarting from a bitter divorce, Haugen flew to Mexico City and climbed into a ring at Azteca Stadium in front of 133,000 people, the largest audience ever to attend any sporting event. His opponent that night was Julio Cesar Chavez, Mexico's boxing icon, a man so beloved he could probably run for president tomorrow — and win. Before the fight, Haugen mouthed off to the press, claiming most of Chavez's wins were "against Tijuana taxi drivers."

Chavez beat Haugen so badly the referee stopped the fight in the fifth round. Afterward, Haugen acknowledged, "I guess they were tough taxi drivers."

Anybody who follows boxing has watched or heard of Greg Haugen, the tough bastard who just keeps punching and punching. Many are surprised he's taking this fight, but as different as they are in personality, he and Nave are similar in professional circumstance. Both are older fighters who need the money — reportedly in the high five figures — and the prestige this bout offers.

"Both of them are at a point in their career where they cannot afford to lose this fight. They want to build up a reasonable record and get another money fight," says Peter Howes, promoter for the upcoming bout. "They are two very different characters. Paul is poised, well-dressed, well-spoken. Greg is captain of his own ship, right out of the gym, no bull."

"They're smart guys and they know their business. In terms of the match, you're gonna see some immediate action."

The Fourth Street Youth Center is located so close to downtown Reno that you can almost throw a snowball from its front door and hit the garish neon sign that boasts: "RENO — the Biggest Little City in the World." This

grubby building is where the city's young people come to play pool and video games. For the past week, it is also where Paul Nave has been training to prepare for the fight of his life.

Training a boxer in a gambling oasis like Reno might be seen as stylistically fitting. The win-or-lose life of a gambler, after all, does mirror the turbulent roller-coaster ride a pro boxer faces. And in gambling, as in boxing, whether you win or lose, there's no one to blame but yourself.

In Nave's case, though, Reno has been chosen for convenience and its natural attributes. There are only two full-time boxing gyms in all of Marin County, San Francisco, and Oakland; Reno offers gym space at a high altitude that helps improve a boxer's cardiovascular training. Also, this weekend, the Atlantis Casino Resort will host a pay-per-view championship bout, and Nave has agreed to help promote his fight, co-sponsored by the Atlantis, by hosting the event.

And Reno is close to Sacramento. And commuting from Sacramento to spar with Nave is three-time world champion Tony "The Tiger" Lopez, one of the few men in the world who has ever beaten Greg Haugen.

Like Nave and Haugen, Lopez is on a bit of a comeback trail himself, looking for a couple of big payoff wins, and will also be fighting on the 27th. Having been in the ring with both fighters, he's got an insider's view of what might happen.

"Haugen's in your face, Nave's in your face. I think it's gonna be one of these fights that's gonna go back and forth. Someone might take the first couple rounds, or it might even be even rounds all the way through. I think you're gonna find out toward the middle, or towards the end of the fight, when it starts to wear. They both hit about the same.

"Honestly, I think Haugen hits a little bit harder than Paul does, but shit, that don't really mean nothing either."

In 1994 Lopez went 10 rounds with Haugen before finally knocking him out. It was, Lopez says, the longest 10 rounds of his life.

"Haugen — he's kinda like I am. I don't give a shit about anything. I figure, the man's gonna be punching, he's gonna be swinging just like I am. But that's me," Lopez says. "Paul seems more like a guy that wants to have a plan when he goes in. He's a businessman. He wants to go in there with a business plan.

"It should be Paul 'The Businessman' Nave."

The Youth Center gets quiet as Nave and Lopez lace up their oversize 16-ounce sparring gloves and rub their faces with vaseline. At the bell, the two friends tap fists and get into it



immediately. Nave's feet are constantly in motion, as Lopez follows him around the ring, cocking his head quizzically, searching for a chink in the armor. Nave engages, then quickly disengages, and occasionally unleashes a wicked right hook — one of his strongest punches. A portable radio blares a Top 40 station, with the repeated lyric "Everybody dance now."

Harold DeRouen leans against the rope in Nave's corner, watching the action with the intensity of the pit man behind the craps table. A dapper, laid-back guy from Sebastopol, he's trained Nave for the last several years. And like Nave, his easygoing demeanor disappears in the gym. It's all business here.

Nave normally hangs in and fights close, but for this bout the strategy is different, says DeRouen. They plan to move Haugen around the ring more than usual, make him miss and get him frustrated.

Nave is not thought of as a gym fighter, instead saving it for the ring, but today both he and Lopez seem to be going full speed. Lopez throws so many different things at Nave — quick jabs, combinations to the body, devastating wallops to the gut — you almost forget about Nave, until he connects with an uppercut out of nowhere, and you realize he's been right there all along. Despite the new strategy, Nave still seems most potent inside, when he's hammering away up close.

The final bell finds both slugging like crazy, then Nave slips and loses his footing, and it's over. Lopez leans against the rope, and the two fighters have a private conversation. It's feedback that Nave can consider for another three weeks.



Later the same evening, as part of another promotional appearance, Nave hosts a pay-per-view bout being shown on a big screen in the Atlantis' disco lounge, a vacant junior welterweight title match between six-time world champion Julio Cesar Chavez and Miguel Angel Gonzalez, live from Mexico City. Once undefeated for 14 years, Chavez now is older and slower. Gonzalez is top-ranked. Odds say it could go either way. The guests are chatty and excited, and the complimentary bars pour like spigots.

A few minutes before the bout begins, Nave stands in front of the big screen and looks out over the crowd of hard-core VIP gamblers. Above his head is suspended an enormous metallic orange octopus covered in rivets, a surreal apparition apparently designed to wiggle and shoot lasers over the dance floor.

The Marin County Assassin, dwarfed by the screen behind him, waits patiently for his cue. This promotional appearance means little to a man who has hustled his entire life. But how long does he have left? He's 37, an age by which most fighters are already retired. He has a daughter. He still wants to walk, talk, and chew gum someday. Either he scores an upset by beating Haugen, or it's back to selling jalapeños.

Somebody hands him a microphone. He introduces himself to the room, and starts in about his upcoming fight with Haugen. But something is missing. The high-rolling boxing fans squint to focus on this handsome man in a sport coat. He's talking about how he once sparred with Chavez. He's going on about a title fight in someplace called San Rafael.

A man in a red T-shirt interrupts, his voice loud enough for all to hear: "What's your name again?"

Nave pauses; the room grows quiet, and he answers politely, "Paul Nave."

The man thrusts a finger at him and announces, "I'm gonna remember you!" **SF**