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Muhammad Ali

The Complete Guide

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Chapter 1

Overview

1.1 Muhammad Ali

“Cassius Clay” redirects here. For other uses, see [Cassius Clay](#) (disambiguation).

For other people named Muhammad Ali, see [Muhammad Ali](#) (disambiguation).

Muhammad Ali (/ɑːˈliː/^[2] born **Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr.**, January 17, 1942 – June 3, 2016)^[3] was an American professional boxer, generally considered among the greatest heavyweights in the history of the sport. Early in his career, Ali was known for being a controversial and polarizing figure both in the boxing ring and out.^{[4][5]} He is one of the most recognized sports figures of the past 100 years, crowned “Sportsman of the Century” by *Sports Illustrated* and “Sports Personality of the Century” by the BBC.^{[6][7]} He also wrote several best-selling books about his career, including *The Greatest: My Own Story* and *The Soul of a Butterfly*.

Ali, originally known as Cassius Clay, began training at 12 years old and at the age of 22 won the world heavyweight championship in 1964 from Sonny Liston in a stunning upset. Shortly after that bout, Ali joined the Nation of Islam and changed his name. He converted to Sunni Islam in 1975, and 30 years later began adhering to Sufism.

In 1967, three years after winning the heavyweight title, Ali refused to be conscripted into the U.S. military, citing his religious beliefs and opposition to American involvement in the Vietnam War. He was eventually arrested and found guilty on draft evasion charges and stripped of his boxing title. He did not fight again for nearly four years—losing a time of peak performance in an athlete’s career. Ali’s appeal worked its way up to the U.S. Supreme Court where, in 1971, his conviction was overturned. Ali’s actions as a conscientious objector to the war made him an icon for the larger counterculture generation.^{[8][9]}

Ali remains the only three-time lineal world heavyweight champion; he won the title in 1964, 1974, and 1978. Between February 25, 1964 and September 19, 1964 Muhammad Ali reigned as the undisputed heavyweight boxing champion.

Nicknamed “The Greatest”, Ali was involved in several

historic boxing matches.^[10] Notable among these were the first Liston fight, three with rival Joe Frazier, and one with George Foreman, in which he regained titles he had been stripped of seven years earlier.

At a time when most fighters let their managers do the talking, Ali, inspired by professional wrestler “Gorgeous” George Wagner, thrived in—and indeed craved—the spotlight, where he was often provocative and outlandish.^{[11][12][13]} He controlled most press conferences and interviews, and spoke freely about issues unrelated to boxing.^{[14][15]} Ali transformed the role and image of the African American athlete in America by his embrace of racial pride and his willingness to antagonize the white establishment in doing so.^{[16][17][18]} In the words of writer Joyce Carol Oates, he was one of the few athletes in any sport to “define the terms of his public reputation”.^[19]

1.1.1 Early life and amateur career

Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr. was born on January 17, 1942, in Louisville, Kentucky.^[20] The older of two boys, he was named for his father, Cassius Marcellus Clay Sr., who himself was named in honour of the 19th century abolitionist and politician of the same name. He had a sister and four brothers, including Nathaniel Clay.^{[21][22]} Clay’s paternal grandparents were John Clay and Sallie Anne Clay; Clay’s sister Eva quoted that Sallie was a native of Madagascar.^[23] His father painted billboards and signs,^[20] and his mother, Odessa O’Grady Clay, was a household domestic. Although Cassius Sr. was a Methodist, he allowed Odessa to bring up both Cassius and his younger brother Rudolph “Rudy” Clay (later renamed Rahman Ali) as Baptists.^[24] He was a descendant of pre-Civil War era American slaves in the American South, and was predominantly of African-American descent, with Irish and English heritage.^{[25][26][27]}

He was first directed toward boxing by Louisville police officer and boxing coach Joe E. Martin,^[28] who encountered the 12-year-old fuming over a thief taking his bicycle. He told the officer he was going to “whup” the thief. The officer told him he better learn how to box first.^[29] For the last four years of Clay’s amateur career he was trained by boxing cutman Chuck Bodak.^[30]

Clay won six Kentucky Golden Gloves titles, two national Golden Gloves titles, an Amateur Athletic Union National Title, and the Light Heavyweight gold medal in the 1960 Summer Olympics in Rome.^[31] Clay's amateur record was 100 wins with five losses. Ali claimed in his 1975 autobiography that shortly after his return from the Rome Olympics he threw his gold medal into the Ohio River after he and a friend were refused service at a "whites-only" restaurant and fought with a white gang. The story has since been disputed and several of Ali's friends, including Bundini Brown and photographer Howard Bingham, have denied it. Brown told *Sports Illustrated* writer Mark Kram, "Honkies sure bought into that one!" Thomas Hauser's biography of Ali stated that Ali was refused service at the diner but that he lost his medal a year after he won it.^[32] Ali received a replacement medal at a basketball intermission during the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, where he lit the torch to start the games.

1.1.2 Professional boxing

Early career

Clay made his professional debut on October 29, 1960, winning a six-round decision over Tunney Hunsaker. From then until the end of 1963, Clay amassed a record of 19–0 with 15 wins by knockout. He defeated boxers including Tony Esperti, Jim Robinson, Donnie Fleeman, Alonzo Johnson, George Logan, Willi Besmanoff, Lamar Clark, Doug Jones and Henry Cooper. Clay also beat his former trainer and veteran boxer Archie Moore in a 1962 match.

These early fights were not without trials. Clay was knocked down both by Sonny Banks and Cooper. In the Cooper fight, Clay was floored by a left hook at the end of round four and was saved by the bell. The fight with Doug Jones on March 13, 1963, was Clay's toughest fight during this stretch. The number-two and -three heavyweight contenders respectively, Clay and Jones fought on Jones' home turf at New York's Madison Square Garden. Jones staggered Clay the first round, and the unanimous decision for Clay was greeted by boos and a rain of debris thrown onto the ring (watching on closed-circuit TV, heavyweight champ Sonny Liston quipped that if he fought Clay he might get locked up for murder). The fight was later named "Fight of the Year".

In each of these fights, Clay vocally belittled his opponents and vaunted his abilities. Jones was "an ugly little man" and Cooper was a "bum". He was embarrassed to get in the ring with Alex Miteff. Madison Square Garden was "too small for me".^[33] Clay's behavior provoked the ire of many boxing fans.^[34]

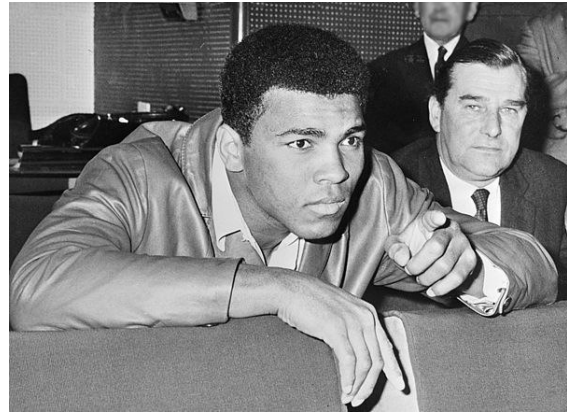
After Clay left Moore's camp in 1960, partially due to Clay's refusing to do chores such as dish-washing and sweeping, he hired Angelo Dundee, whom he had met

in February 1957 during Ali's amateur career,^[35] to be his trainer. Around this time, Clay sought longtime idol Sugar Ray Robinson to be his manager, but was rebuffed.^[36]

Heavyweight champion

Main article: [Muhammad Ali vs. Sonny Liston](#)

By late 1963, Clay had become the top contender for



Muhammad Ali in 1966

Sonny Liston's title. The fight was set for February 25, 1964, in Miami. Liston was an intimidating personality, a dominating fighter with a criminal past and ties to the mob. Based on Clay's uninspired performance against Jones and Cooper in his previous two fights, and Liston's destruction of former heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson in two first-round knock outs, Clay was a 7–1 underdog. Despite this, Clay taunted Liston during the pre-fight buildup, dubbing him "the big ugly bear". "Liston even smells like a bear," Clay said. "After I beat him I'm going to donate him to the zoo."^[37] Clay turned the pre-fight weigh-in into a circus, shouting at Liston that "someone is going to die at ringside tonight". Clay's pulse rate was measured at 120, more than double his normal 54.^[38] Many of those in attendance thought Clay's behavior stemmed from fear, and some commentators wondered if he would show up for the bout.

The outcome of the fight was a major upset. At the opening bell, Liston rushed at Clay, seemingly angry and looking for a quick knockout. But Clay's superior speed and mobility enabled him to elude Liston, making the champion miss and look awkward. At the end of the first round Clay opened up his attack and hit Liston repeatedly with jabs. Liston fought better in round two, but at the beginning of the third round Clay hit Liston with a combination that buckled his knees and opened a cut under his left eye. This was the first time Liston had ever been cut. At the end of round four, as Clay returned to his corner, he began experiencing blinding pain in his eyes and asked his trainer Angelo Dundee to cut off his gloves. Dundee refused. It has been speculated that the problem was due to ointment used to seal Liston's cuts, perhaps deliberately

applied by his corner to his gloves.^[38] (Though unconfirmed, Bert Sugar claimed that two of Liston's opponents also complained about their eyes "burning".^{[39][40]})

Despite Liston's attempts to knock out a blinded Clay, Clay was able to survive the fifth round until sweat and tears rinsed the irritation from his eyes. In the sixth, Clay dominated, hitting Liston repeatedly. Liston did not answer the bell for the seventh round, and Clay was declared the winner by TKO. Liston stated that the reason he quit was an injured shoulder. Following the win, a triumphant Clay rushed to the edge of the ring and, pointing to the ringside press, shouted: "Eat your words!" He added, "I am the greatest! I shook up the world. I'm the prettiest thing that ever lived."^[41]

In winning this fight, Clay became at age 22 the youngest boxer to take the title from a reigning heavyweight champion, though Floyd Patterson was the youngest to win the heavyweight championship at 21, during an elimination bout following Rocky Marciano's retirement. Mike Tyson broke both records in 1986 when he defeated Trevor Berbick to win the heavyweight title at age 20.

Soon after the Liston fight, Clay changed his name to Muhammad Ali upon converting to Islam and affiliating with the Nation of Islam. Ali then faced a rematch with Liston scheduled for May 1965 in Lewiston, Maine. It had been scheduled for Boston the previous November, but was postponed for six months due to Ali's emergency surgery for a hernia three days before.^[42] The fight was controversial. Midway through the first round, Liston was knocked down by a difficult-to-see blow the press dubbed a "phantom punch". Ali refused to retreat to a neutral corner, and referee Jersey Joe Walcott did not begin the count. Liston rose after he had been down about 20 seconds, and the fight momentarily continued. But a few seconds later Walcott stopped the match, declaring Ali the winner by knockout. The entire fight lasted less than two minutes.^[43]

It has since been speculated that Liston dropped to the ground purposely. Proposed motivations include threats on his life from the Nation of Islam, that he had bet against himself and that he "took a dive" to pay off debts. Slow-motion replays show that Liston was jarred by a chopping right from Ali, although it is unclear whether the blow was a genuine knock-out punch.^[44]

Ali defended his title against former heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson on November 22, 1965. Before the match, Ali mocked Patterson, who was widely known to call him by his former name Cassius Clay, as an "Uncle Tom", "The Rabbit", and a "white man's champion". Although Ali clearly had the better of Patterson, who appeared injured during the fight, the match lasted 12 rounds before being called on a technical knockout. Patterson later said he had strained his sacroiliac. Ali was criticized in the sports media for appearing to have toyed with Patterson during the fight.^{[45][46]}

Ali and then-WBA heavyweight champion boxer Ernie

Terrell had agreed to meet for a bout in Chicago on March 29, 1966 (the WBA, one of two boxing associations, had stripped Ali of his title following his joining the Nation of Islam). But in February Ali was reclassified by the Louisville draft board as 1-A from 1-Y, and he indicated that he would refuse to serve, commenting to the press, "I ain't got nothing against no Viet Cong; no Viet Cong never called me nigger."^[47] Amidst the media and public outcry over Ali's stance, the Illinois Athletic Commission refused to sanction the fight, citing technicalities.^[48]

Instead, Ali traveled to Canada and Europe and won championship bouts against George Chuvalo, Henry Cooper, Brian London and Karl Mildener.

Ali returned to the United States to fight Cleveland Williams in the Houston Astrodome on November 14, 1966. According to Sports Illustrated, the bout drew a then-indoor world record crowd of 35,460 people. Williams had once been considered among the hardest punchers in the heavyweight division, but in 1964 he had been shot at point-blank range by a Texas policeman, resulting in the loss of one kidney and 10 feet (3.0 m) of his small intestine. Ali dominated Williams, winning a third-round technical knockout in what some consider the finest performance of his career.

Ali fought Terrell in Houston on February 6, 1967. Terrell was billed as Ali's toughest opponent since Liston—unbeaten in five years and having defeated many of the boxers Ali had faced. Terrell was big, strong and had a three-inch reach advantage over Ali. During the lead up to the bout, Terrell repeatedly called Ali "Clay", much to Ali's annoyance (Ali called Cassius Clay his "slave name"). The two almost came to blows over the name issue in a pre-fight interview with Howard Cosell. Ali seemed intent on humiliating Terrell. "I want to torture him," he said. "A clean knockout is too good for him."^[49] The fight was close until the seventh round when Ali bloodied Terrell and almost knocked him out. In the eighth round, Ali taunted Terrell, hitting him with jabs and shouting between punches, "What's my name, Uncle Tom... what's my name?" Ali won a unanimous 15-round decision. Terrell claimed that early in the fight Ali deliberately thumbed him in the eye — forcing Terrell to fight half-blind — and then, in a clinch, rubbed the wounded eye against the ropes. Because of Ali's apparent intent to prolong the fight to inflict maximum punishment, critics described the bout as "one of the ugliest boxing fights". Tex Maule later wrote: "It was a wonderful demonstration of boxing skill and a barbarous display of cruelty." Ali denied the accusations of cruelty but, for Ali's critics, the fight provided more evidence of his arrogance.

After Ali's title defense against Zora Folley on March 22, he was stripped of his title due to his refusal to be drafted to army service.^[20] His boxing license was also suspended by the state of New York. He was convicted of draft evasion on June 20 and sentenced to five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. He paid a bond and remained free while

the verdict was being appealed.

Exile and comeback

Main articles: *Fight of the Century* and *Ali-Frazier II*

Ali refused to be inducted into the armed forces, stating publicly, “no Vietcong ever called me nigger”. He was systematically denied a boxing license in every state and stripped of his passport. As a result, he did not fight from March 1967 to October 1970—from ages 25 to almost 29—as his case worked its way through the appeal process. In 1971, the US Supreme Court overturned his conviction in a unanimous 8-0 ruling (Thurgood Marshall abstained from the case).

During this time of inactivity, as opposition to the Vietnam War began to grow and Ali’s stance gained sympathy, he spoke at colleges across the nation, criticizing the Vietnam War and advocating African American pride and racial justice.

On August 12, 1970, with his case still in appeal, Ali was granted a license to box by the City of Atlanta Athletic Commission, thanks to State Senator Leroy R. Johnson.^[50] Ali’s first return bout was against Jerry Quarry on October 26, resulting in a win after three rounds after Quarry was cut.

A month earlier, a victory in federal court forced the New York State Boxing Commission to reinstate Ali’s license.^[51] He fought Oscar Bonavena at Madison Square Garden in December, an uninspired performance that ended in a dramatic TKO of Bonavena in the 15th round. The win left Ali as a top contender against heavyweight champion Joe Frazier.

Ali and Frazier’s first fight, held at the Garden on March 8, 1971, was nicknamed the “*Fight of the Century*”, due to the tremendous excitement surrounding a bout between two undefeated fighters, each with a legitimate claim as heavyweight champions. Veteran boxing writer John Condon called it “the greatest event I’ve ever worked on in my life”. The bout was broadcast to 35 foreign countries; promoters granted 760 press passes.^[32]

Adding to the atmosphere were the considerable pre-fight theatrics and name calling. Ali portrayed Frazier as a “dumb tool of the white establishment”. “Frazier is too ugly to be champ,” Ali said. “Frazier is too dumb to be champ.” Ali also frequently called Frazier an Uncle Tom. Dave Wolf, who worked in Frazier’s camp, recalled that, “Ali was saying ‘the only people rooting for Joe Frazier are white people in suits, Alabama sheriffs, and members of the Ku Klux Klan. I’m fighting for the little man in the ghetto.’ Joe was sitting there, smashing his fist into the palm of his hand, saying, ‘What the fuck does he know about the ghetto?’”^[32]

Ali began training at a farm near Reading, Pennsylvania in 1971 and finding the country setting to his liking,

Muhammad Ali then sought to develop a real training camp in the countryside. Twenty minutes from Reading, (one hour from Philadelphia and a two-hour drive from New York City), Ali found a five-acre site on a Pennsylvania country road in the village of Deer Lake. (On a map, the location can more easily be found by looking for “Orwigsburg”).^[52] On this site, Ali carved out what was to become his training camp, the camp where he lived and trained for all the many fights he had from 1972 on to the end of his career in the 1980s. The camp still stands today and is a *bed and breakfast*.^[53]

The Monday night fight lived up to its billing. In a preview of their two other fights, a crouching, bobbing and weaving Frazier constantly pressured Ali, getting hit regularly by Ali jabs and combinations, but relentlessly attacking and scoring repeatedly, especially to Ali’s body. The fight was even in the early rounds, but Ali was taking more punishment than ever in his career. On several occasions in the early rounds he played to the crowd and shook his head “no” after he was hit. In the later rounds—in what was the first appearance of the “rope-a-dope strategy”—Ali leaned against the ropes and absorbed punishment from Frazier, hoping to tire him. In the 11th round, Frazier connected with a left hook that wobbled Ali, but because it appeared that Ali might be clowning as he staggered backwards across the ring, Frazier hesitated to press his advantage, fearing an Ali counter-attack. In the final round, Frazier knocked Ali down with a vicious left hook, which referee Arthur Mercante said was as hard as a man can be hit. Ali was back on his feet in three seconds^[32] Nevertheless, Ali lost by unanimous decision, his first professional defeat.

Ali’s characterizations of Frazier during the lead-up to the fight cemented a personal animosity toward Ali by Frazier that lasted until Frazier’s death.^[32] Frazier and his camp always considered Ali’s words cruel and unfair, far beyond what was necessary to sell tickets. Shortly after the bout, in the studios of ABC’s *Wide World of Sports* during a nationally televised interview with the two boxers, Frazier rose from his chair and wrestled Ali to the floor after Ali called him ignorant.

In the same year basketball star Wilt Chamberlain challenged Ali, and a fight was scheduled for July 26. Although the seven foot two inch tall Chamberlain had formidable physical advantages over Ali, weighing 60 pounds more and able to reach 14 inches further, Ali was able to intimidate Chamberlain into calling off the bout. This happened during a shared press conference with Chamberlain in which Ali repeatedly responded to reporters with the traditional lumberjack warning, “Timber,” and said, “The tree will fall!” With these statements of confidence, Ali was able to unsettle his taller opponent into calling off the bout.^[54]

After the loss to Frazier, Ali fought Jerry Quarry, had a second bout with Floyd Patterson and faced Bob Foster in 1972, winning a total of six fights that year. In 1973, Ali

suffered the second loss of his career at the hands of **Ken Norton**, who broke Ali's jaw during the fight. After initially seeking retirement, Ali won a controversial decision against Norton in their second bout, leading to a rematch at Madison Square Garden on January 28, 1974, with Joe Frazier—who had recently lost his title to George Foreman.

Ali was strong in the early rounds of the fight, and staggered Frazier in the second round (referee Tony Perez mistakenly thought he heard the bell ending the round and stepped between the two fighters as Ali was pressing his attack, giving Frazier time to recover). However, Frazier came on in the middle rounds, snapping Ali's head in round seven and driving him to the ropes at the end of round eight. The last four rounds saw round-to-round shifts in momentum between the two fighters. Throughout most of the bout, however, Ali was able to circle away from Frazier's dangerous left hook and to tie Frazier up when he was cornered—the latter a tactic that Frazier's camp complained of bitterly. Judges awarded Ali a unanimous decision.

Heavyweight champion (second tenure)

Main articles: [The Rumble in the Jungle](#) and [Thrilla in Manila](#)

The defeat of Frazier set the stage for a title fight against heavyweight champion **George Foreman** in Kinshasa, Zaire, on October 30, 1974—a bout nicknamed "[The Rumble in the Jungle](#)". Foreman was considered one of the hardest punchers in heavyweight history. In assessing the fight, analysts pointed out that **Joe Frazier** and **Ken Norton**—who had given Ali four tough battles and won two of them—had been both devastated by Foreman in second round knockouts. Ali was 32 years old, and had clearly lost speed and reflexes since his twenties. Contrary to his later persona, Foreman was at the time a brooding and intimidating presence. Almost no one associated with the sport, not even Ali's long-time supporter **Howard Cosell**, gave the former champion a chance of winning.

As usual, Ali was confident and colorful before the fight. He told interviewer **David Frost**, "If you think the world was surprised when Nixon resigned, wait 'til I whup Foreman's behind!"^[55] He told the press, "I've done something new for this fight. I done wrestled with an alligator, I done tussled with a whale; handcuffed lightning, thrown thunder in jail; only last week, I murdered a rock, injured a stone, hospitalized a brick; I'm so mean I make medicine sick."^[56] Ali was wildly popular in Zaire, with crowds chanting "Ali, bomaye" ("Ali, kill him") wherever he went.

Ali opened the fight moving and scoring with right crosses to Foreman's head. Then, beginning in the second round—and to the consternation of his corner—Ali retreated to the ropes and invited Foreman to hit him while

covering up, clinching and counter-punching—all while verbally taunting Foreman. ("Is that all you got, George? They told me you could hit.") The move, which would later become known as the "[Rope-A-Dope](#)", so violated conventional boxing wisdom—letting one of the hardest hitters in boxing strike at will—that at ringside writer **George Plimpton** thought the fight had to be fixed.^[32] Foreman, increasingly angered, threw punches that were deflected and did not land squarely. Midway through the fight, as Foreman began tiring, Ali countered more frequently and effectively with punches and flurries, which electrified the pro-Ali crowd. In the eighth round, Ali dropped an exhausted Foreman with a combination at center ring; Foreman failed to make the count. Against the odds, and amidst pandemonium in the ring, Ali had regained the title by knockout.



President Jimmy Carter greets Muhammad Ali at a White House dinner, 1977

In reflecting on the fight, George Foreman later said: "I'll admit it. Muhammad outthought me and outfought me."^[32]

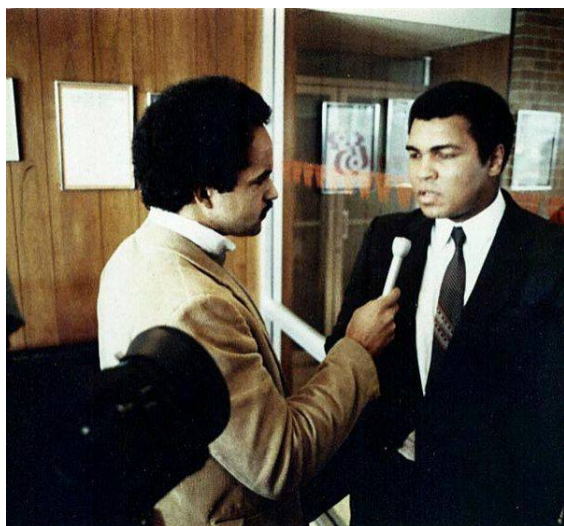
Ali's next opponents included **Chuck Wepner**, **Ron Lyle**, and **Joe Bugner**. Wepner, a journeyman known as "[The Bayonne Bleeder](#)", stunned Ali with a knockdown in the ninth round; Ali would later say he tripped on Wepner's foot. It was a bout that would inspire **Sylvester Stallone** to create the acclaimed film, *Rocky*.

Ali then agreed to a third match with Joe Frazier in Manila. The bout, known as the "[Thrilla in Manila](#)", was held on October 1, 1975^[20] in temperatures approaching 100 °F (38 °C). In the first rounds, Ali was aggressive, moving and exchanging blows with Frazier. However, Ali soon appeared to tire and adopted the "rope-a-dope" strategy, frequently resorting to clinches. During this part of the bout Ali did some effective counter-punching, but for the most part absorbed punishment from a relentlessly attacking Frazier. In the 12th round, Frazier began to tire, and Ali scored several sharp blows that closed Frazier's left eye and opened a cut over his right eye. With Frazier's

vision now diminished, Ali dominated the 13th and 14th rounds, at times conducting what boxing historian Mike Silver called “target practice” on Frazier’s head. The fight was stopped when Frazier’s trainer, Eddie Futch, refused to allow Frazier to answer the bell for the 15th and final round, despite Frazier’s protests. Frazier’s eyes were both swollen shut. Ali, in his corner, winner by TKO, slumped on his stool, clearly spent.

An ailing Ali said afterwards that the fight “was the closest thing to dying that I know”, and, when later asked if he had viewed the fight on videotape, reportedly said, “Why would I want to go back and see Hell?” After the fight he cited Frazier as “the greatest fighter of all times next to me”.

Decline



Ali being interviewed by WBAL-TV's Curt Anderson, 1978, Baltimore, Maryland

Following the Manila bout, Ali fought Jean-Pierre Coopman, Jimmy Young, and Richard Dunn, winning the last by knockout. Later in 1976, he participated in an exhibition bout in Tokyo against Japanese professional wrestler and martial artist Antonio Inoki (Muhammad Ali vs. Antonio Inoki).^[57] Though the fight was a publicity stunt, Ali suffered leg bruises, two blood clots and an infection in his legs due to Inoki’s kicks.^[57] The fight was ultimately declared a draw.^[57] He fought Ken Norton for the third time at Yankee Stadium in September 1976, where Ali won by a heavily contested decision, which was loudly booed by the audience. He reacted to the fallout of this by announcing a brief retirement to practice his faith in Islam, having converted to Sunni Islam after falling out with the Nation of Islam the previous year.^[58]

After winning against Alfredo Evangelista in May 1977, Ali struggled in his next fight against Earnie Shavers that September, who pummeled him a few times with punches to the head. Ali won the fight by another unanimous de-

cision, but the bout caused his longtime doctor Ferdie Pacheco to quit after he was rebuffed for telling Ali he should retire. Pacheco was quoted as saying, “the New York State Athletic Commission gave me a report that showed Ali’s kidneys were falling apart. I wrote to Angelo Dundee, Ali’s trainer, his wife and Ali himself. I got nothing back in response. That’s when I decided enough is enough.”^[32]

Following this win, on July 27, 1979, Ali announced his retirement from boxing. His retirement was short-lived, however; Ali announced his comeback to face Larry Holmes for the WBC belt in an attempt to win the heavyweight championship an unprecedented fourth time. The fight was largely motivated by Ali’s need for money. Boxing writer Richie Giachetti said, “Larry didn’t want to fight Ali. He knew Ali had nothing left; he knew it would be a horror.”

It was around this time that Ali started struggling with vocal stutters and trembling hands.^[59] The Nevada Athletic Commission (NAC) ordered that he undergo a complete physical in Las Vegas before being allowed to fight again. Ali chose instead to check into the Mayo Clinic, who declared him fit to fight. Their opinion was accepted by the NAC on July 31, 1980, paving the way for Ali’s return to the ring.^[60]

The fight took place on October 2, 1980, in Las Vegas, with Holmes easily dominating Ali, who was weakened from thyroid medication he had taken to lose weight. Giachetti called the fight “awful... the worst sports event I ever had to cover”. Actor Sylvester Stallone at ring-side said it was like watching an autopsy on a man who is still alive.^[32] Ali’s trainer Angelo Dundee finally stopped the fight in the eleventh round, the only fight Ali lost by knockout. The Holmes fight is said to have contributed to Ali’s Parkinson’s syndrome.^[61] Despite pleas to definitively retire, Ali fought one last time on December 11, 1981 in Nassau against Trevor Berbick, losing a ten-round decision.

1.1.3 Later years and death

Ali was diagnosed with Parkinson’s syndrome in 1984, a disease that commonly results from head trauma from activities such as boxing.^{[62][63][64]} Ali still remained active during this time, however, later participating as a guest referee at *WrestleMania I*.^{[65][66]}

Around 1987, the California Bicentennial Foundation for the U.S. Constitution selected Ali to personify the vitality of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Ali rode on a float at the following year’s Tournament of Roses Parade, launching the U.S. Constitution’s 200th birthday commemoration. He published an oral history, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times* by Thomas Hauser, in 1991. That same year Ali traveled to Iraq during the Gulf War and met with Saddam Hussein in an attempt to negotiate the release of American hostages.^[67] In 1996, he had the



Muhammad Ali



President Reagan "punching" Muhammad Ali in the oval office, 1983

honor of lighting the flame at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia. Ali's bout with Parkinson's led to a gradual decline in Ali's health though he was still active into the early years of the millennium, even promoting his own biopic, *Ali*, in 2001. Ali also contributed an on-camera segment to the *America: A Tribute to Heroes* benefit concert.

On November 17, 2002, Muhammad Ali went to Afghanistan as the "U.N. Messenger of Peace".^[68] He was in Kabul for a three-day goodwill mission as a special

guest of the UN.^[69]

On September 1, 2009, Ali visited Ennis, County Clare, Ireland, the home of his great-grandfather, Abe Grady, who emigrated to the U.S. in the 1860s, eventually settling in Kentucky.^[70] A crowd of 10,000 turned out for a civic reception, where Ali was made the first Honorary Freeman of Ennis.^[71]

On July 27, 2012, Ali was a titular bearer of the Olympic Flag during the opening ceremonies of the 2012 Summer Olympics in London. He was helped to his feet by his wife Lonnie to stand before the flag due to his Parkinson's rendering him unable to carry it into the stadium.^[72]

On February 3, 2013, in a *Washington Times* article, Ali's brother, Rahman Ali, said Muhammad could no longer speak and could be dead within days.^[73] Ali's daughter, May May Ali, responded to the rumors, stating that she had talked to him on the phone the morning of February 3 and he was fine.^[74] On December 20, 2014, Ali was hospitalized for a mild case of pneumonia.^[75] Ali was once again hospitalized on January 15, 2015, for a urinary tract infection after being found unresponsive at a guest house in Scottsdale, Arizona.^{[76][77]} He was released the next day.^[78] Ali was hospitalized again on June 2, 2016 with a respiratory condition. His condition was initially described as "fair".^[79] However, the following day, Ali was placed on life support. His condition declined due to serious issues.^{[80][81]} His condition did not improve and late on June 3, it was announced that Ali had died.^{[82][83][84]}

1.1.4 Personal life

Marriages and children

Ali has been married four times and has seven daughters and two sons. Ali met his first wife, cocktail waitress Sonji Roi, approximately one month before they married on August 14, 1964.^[85] Roi's objections to certain Muslim customs in regard to dress for women contributed to the breakup of their marriage. They divorced on January 10, 1966.

On August 17, 1967, Ali married Belinda Boyd. After the wedding, she, like Ali, converted to Islam. She changed her name to Khalilah Ali, though she was still called Belinda by old friends and family. They had four children: Maryum (born 1968), twins Jamilah and Rasheda (born 1970), and Muhammad Ali, Jr. (born 1972).^[86] Maryum has a career as an author and rapper.^[87]

Laila later became a boxer in 1999,^[88] despite her father's earlier comments against female boxing in 1978: "Women are not made to be hit in the breast, and face like that... the body's not made to be punched right here [patting his chest]. Get *hit* in the breast... *hard*... and all that."^[89] As of 2014, Laila is undefeated in the super middleweight category, with 24 wins, no losses, and no

draws.^[90]

On November 19, 1986, Ali married Yolanda (“Lonnie”) Williams. They had been friends since 1964 in Louisville. They have one son, Asaad Amin, whom they adopted when Amin was five months old.^{[86][91][92][93][94]}

Ali was a resident of **Cherry Hill, New Jersey** in the early 1970s.^[95] Ali has two other daughters, Miya and Khaliah, from extramarital relationships.^{[86][96]}

Ali most recently lived in **Scottsdale, Arizona**, with Lonnie.^[97] In January 2007 it was reported that they had put their home in **Berrien Springs, Michigan**, up for sale and had purchased a home in eastern **Jefferson County, Kentucky**, for \$1,875,000.^[98] Lonnie converted to Islam from Catholicism in her late twenties.^[99]

Religious beliefs



Ali at an address by *Elijah Muhammad*

Affiliation with Nation of Islam Ali said that he first heard of the **Nation of Islam (NOI)** when he was fighting in the Golden Gloves tournament in Chicago in 1959, and attended his first NOI meeting in 1961. He continued to attend meetings, although keeping his involvement hidden from the public. In 1962, Clay met **Malcolm X**, who soon became his spiritual and political mentor, and by the time of the first Liston fight NOI members, including Malcolm X, were visible in his entourage. This led to a story in *The Miami Herald* just before the fight disclosing that Clay had joined the Nation, which nearly caused the bout to be canceled.

In fact, Clay was initially refused entry to the Nation of Islam (often called the Black Muslims at the time) due to his boxing career.^[100] However, after he won the championship from Liston in 1964, the Nation of Islam was more receptive and agreed to recruit him as a member.^[100] Shortly afterwards, **Elijah Muhammad** recorded a statement that Clay would be renamed **Muhammad** (one who is worthy of praise) **Ali** (fourth rightly guided caliph).

Only a few journalists (most notably **Howard Cosell**) ac-

cepted the new name at that time. Ali later announced: “Cassius Clay is my slave name.”^[101] Ali’s friendship with **Malcolm X** ended as Malcolm split with the NOI a couple of weeks after Ali joined, and Ali remained with the Nation.^{[100][102]} Ali later said that turning his back on Malcolm was one of the mistakes he regretted most in his life.^[103]



Malcolm X photographs Ali in February 1964, after his first defeat of Sonny Liston to become world heavyweight champion.

Aligning himself with the Nation of Islam, its leader **Elijah Muhammad**, and a narrative that labeled the white race as the perpetrator of genocide against African Americans made Ali a target of public condemnation. The NOI was widely viewed by whites and even some African Americans as a black separatist “hate religion” with a propensity toward violence; Ali had few qualms about using his influential voice to speak NOI doctrine.^[18] In a press conference articulating his opposition to the Vietnam War, Ali stated, “my enemy is the white people, not the Vietcong”.^[18] In relation to integration, he said: “We who follow the teachings of Elijah Muhammad don’t want to be forced to integrate. Integration is wrong. We don’t want to live with the white man; that’s all.”^[104] And in relation to inter-racial marriage: “No intelligent black man or black woman in his or her right black mind wants white boys and white girls coming to their homes to marry their black sons and daughters.”^[104] Indeed, Ali’s religious beliefs at the time included the notion that the white man was “the devil” and that white people were not “righteous”.

Writer **Jerry Izenberg** once noted that, “the Nation became Ali’s family and Elijah Muhammad became his father. But there is an irony to the fact that while the Nation branded white people as devils, Ali had more white colleagues than most African American people did at that time in America, and continued to have them throughout his career.”^[32]

Conversion to Sunni Islam Ali converted from the Nation of Islam sect to mainstream Sunni Islam in 1975. In a 2004 autobiography, written with daughter Hana Yasmeen Ali, Muhammad Ali attributes his conversion to the shift toward Islam made by **Warith Deen Muham-**

mad after he gained control of the Nation of Islam upon the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975. Later in his life, he embraced the spiritual teachings of Universal Sufism founder Inayat Khan.^[105]

1.1.5 Vietnam War and resistance to the draft

Ali registered for the draft on his eighteenth birthday and was listed as 1-A in 1962.^[106] In 1964, he was reclassified as 1-Y (fit for service only in times of national emergency) after two mental tests found his IQ was 78^[107] (16th percentile), well below the armed force's 30th-percentile threshold.^[106] (He was quoted as saying, "I said I was the greatest, not the smartest!")^{[106][107]} By early 1966, the army lowered its standards to permit soldiers above the 15th percentile and Ali was again classified as 1-A.^{[20][106][107]} This classification meant he was now eligible for the draft and induction into the United States Army during a time when the U.S. was involved in the Vietnam War.

When notified of this status, Ali declared that he would refuse to serve in the Army and publicly considered himself a conscientious objector.^[20] Ali stated: "War is against the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. I'm not trying to dodge the draft. We are not supposed to take part in no wars unless declared by Allah or The Messenger. We don't take part in Christian wars or wars of any unbelievers." More succinctly and famously he said, "I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong—no Viet Cong ever called me Nigger." The statement articulated, for many people, a reason to oppose the war.^[108]

Appearing for his scheduled induction into the U.S. Armed Forces on April 28, 1967 in Houston, Ali refused three times to step forward at the call of his name. An officer warned him he was committing a felony punishable by five years in prison and a fine of \$10,000. Once more, Ali refused to budge when his name was called. As a result, he was arrested. On the same day the New York State Athletic Commission suspended his boxing license and stripped him of his title. Other boxing commissions followed suit. Ali would not be able to obtain a license to box in any state for over three years.^[109]

At the trial on June 20, 1967, after only 21 minutes of deliberation, the jury found Ali guilty.^[20] After a Court of Appeals upheld the conviction, the case went to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In the years between the appellate court decision and the Supreme Court verdict, Ali remained free. As public opinion began turning against the war and the Civil Rights movement continued to gather momentum, Ali became a popular speaker at colleges and universities across the country, rare if not unprecedented for a boxer. At Howard University, for example, he gave his popular "Black Is Best" speech to 4,000 cheering students and community intellectuals, after he was invited to speak by

sociology professor Nathan Hare on behalf of the Black Power Committee, a student protest group.^{[110][111]}

On June 28, 1971, the Supreme Court in *Clay v. United States* overturned Ali's conviction by a unanimous 8-0 decision (Justice Thurgood Marshall did not participate).^[112] The decision was not based on, nor did it address, the merits of Ali's claims per se; rather, the Court held that since the Appeal Board gave no reason for the denial of a conscientious objector exemption to Ali, and that it was therefore impossible to determine which of the three basic tests for conscientious objector status offered in the Justice Department's brief that the Appeals Board relied on, Ali's conviction must be reversed.^[113]

Impact of Ali's stance

Ali's example inspired countless black Americans and others. *The New York Times* columnist William Rhoden wrote, "Ali's actions changed my standard of what constituted an athlete's greatness. Possessing a killer jump shot or the ability to stop on a dime was no longer enough. What were you doing for the liberation of your people? What were you doing to help your country live up to the covenant of its founding principles?"^[9]

Recalling Ali's anti-war position, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar said: "I remember the teachers at my high school didn't like Ali because he was so anti-establishment and he kind of thumbed his nose at authority and got away with it. The fact that he was proud to be a Black man and that he had so much talent ... made some people think that he was dangerous. But for those very reasons I enjoyed him."^[114]

Ali inspired Martin Luther King, Jr., who had been reluctant to address the Vietnam War for fear of alienating the Johnson Administration and its support of the civil rights agenda. Now, King began to voice his own opposition to the war for the first time.^[115]

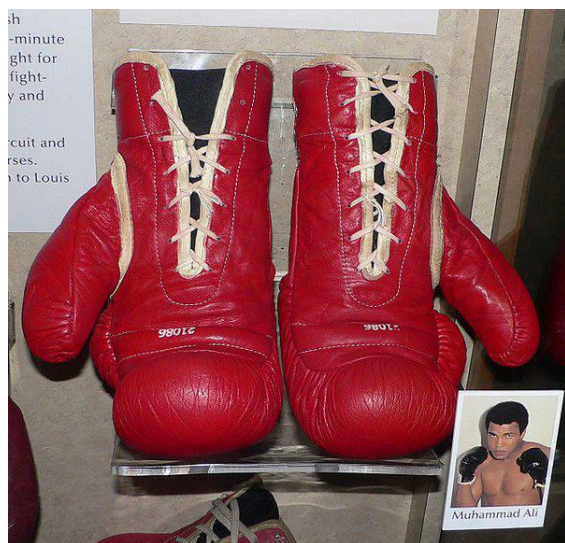
In speaking of the cost on Ali's career of his refusal to be drafted, his trainer Angelo Dundee said, "One thing must be taken into account when talking about Ali: He was robbed of his best years, his prime years."^[116]

Ali's resistance to the draft was covered in the 2013 documentary *The Trials of Muhammad Ali*. (See In the media and popular culture below.)

NSA monitoring of Ali's communications

In a secret operation code-named "Minaret", the National Security Agency (NSA) monitored the communications of leading Americans, including Ali, Senators Frank Church and Howard Baker, Dr. Martin Luther King, prominent U.S. journalists, who criticized the U.S. war in Vietnam.^[117] A review by NSA of the NSA's Minaret program concluded that Minaret was "disreputable if not outright illegal."^[117]

1.1.6 Boxing style



Muhammad Ali's boxing gloves are preserved in the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of American History

Ali had a highly unorthodox boxing style for a heavyweight, epitomized by his catchphrase “float like a butterfly, sting like a bee”. Never an overpowering puncher, Ali relied early in his career on his superior hand speed, superb reflexes and constant movement, dancing and circling opponents for most of the fight, holding his hands low and lashing out with a quick, cutting left jab that he threw from unpredictable angles. His footwork was so strong that it was extremely difficult for opponents to cut down the ring and corner Ali against the ropes.

One of Ali's greatest tricks was to make opponents overcommit by pulling straight backward from punches. Disciplined, world-class boxers chased Ali and threw themselves off balance attempting to hit him because he seemed to be an open target, only missing and leaving themselves exposed to Ali's counter punches, usually a chopping right.^[118] Slow motion replays show that this was precisely the way Sonny Liston was hit and apparently knocked out by Ali in their second fight.^[119] Ali often flaunted his movement and dancing with the “Ali Shuffle”, a sort of center-ring jig.^[120] Ali's early style was so unusual that he was initially discounted because he reminded boxing writers of a lightweight, and it was assumed he would be vulnerable to big hitters like Sonny Liston.

Using a synchronizer, Jimmy Jacobs, who co-managed Mike Tyson, measured young Ali's punching speed versus Sugar Ray Robinson, a welter/middleweight, often considered the best pound-for-pound fighter in history. Ali was 25% faster than Robinson, even though Ali was 45–50 pounds heavier.^[121] Ali's punches produced approximately 1,000 pounds of force.^[122] “No matter what his opponents heard about him, they didn't realize how fast he was until they got in the ring with him”, Jacobs said.^[123]

The effect of Ali's punches was cumulative. “Ali would rub you out”, said Floyd Patterson. “He would hit you 14,000 times and he wouldn't knock you out, he rubbed you out.” Charlie Powell, who fought Ali early in Ali's career and was knocked out in the third round, said: “When he first hit me I said to myself, 'I can take two of these to get one in myself.' But in a little while I found myself getting dizzier and dizzier every time he hit me. He throws punches so easily that you don't realize how much they hurt you until it's too late.”^[33]

Commenting on fighting the young Ali, George Chuvalo said: “He was just so damn fast. When he was young, he moved his legs and hands at the same time. He threw his punches when he was in motion. He'd be out of punching range, and as he moved into range he'd already begun to throw the punch. So if you waited until he got into range to punch back, he beat you every time.”^[32]

Floyd Patterson said, “It's very hard to hit a moving target, and (Ali) moved all the time, with such grace, three minutes of every round for fifteen rounds. He never stopped. It was extraordinary.”^[32]

Darrell Foster, who trained Will Smith for the movie *Ali*, said: “Ali's signature punches were the left jab and the overhand right. But there were at least six different ways Ali used to jab. One was a jab that Ali called the 'snake lick', like cobra striking that comes from the floor almost, really low down. Then there was Ali's rapid-fire jab—three to five jabs in succession rapidly fired at his opponents' eyes to create a blur in his face so he wouldn't be able to see the right hand coming behind it.”^[124]

In the opinion of many, Ali became a different fighter after the 3½-year layoff. Ferdie Pacheco, Ali's corner physician, noted that he had lost his ability to move and dance as before.^[32] This forced Ali to become more stationary and exchange punches more frequently, exposing him to more punishment while indirectly revealing his tremendous ability to take a punch. This physical change led in part to the “rope-a-dope” strategy, where Ali would lie back on the ropes, cover up to protect himself and conserve energy, and tempt opponents to punch themselves out. Ali often taunted opponents in the process and lashed back with sudden, unexpected combinations. The strategy was dramatically successful in the George Foreman fight, but less so in the first Joe Frazier bout when it was introduced.

Of his later career, Arthur Mercante said: “Ali knew all the tricks. He was the best fighter I ever saw in terms of clinching. Not only did he use it to rest, but he was big and strong and knew how to lean on opponents and push and shove and pull to tire them out. Ali was so smart. Most guys are just in there fighting, but Ali had a sense of everything that was happening, almost as though he was sitting at ringside analyzing the fight while he fought it.”^[32]

“Talking trash”

Ali regularly taunted and baited his opponents—including Liston, Frazier, and Foreman—before the fight and often during the bout itself. Ali’s pre-fight theatrics were almost always highly entertaining, and his words were sometimes cutting, and were largely designed to promote the fight. His antics often targeted a particular psychological trigger or vulnerability in his opponent that would provoke a reaction and cause the opponent to lose focus. He said Frazier was “too dumb to be champion”, that he would whip Liston “like his Daddy did”, that Terrell was an “Uncle Tom” and that Patterson was a “rabbit”. In speaking of how Ali stoked Liston’s anger and overconfidence before their first fight, one writer commented that “the most brilliant fight strategy in boxing history was devised by a teenager who had graduated 376 in a class of 391”.^[121]

Ali typically portrayed himself as the “people’s champion” and his opponent as a tool of the (white) establishment (despite the fact that his entourage often had more white faces than his opponents’). During the early part of Ali’s career, he built a reputation for predicting rounds in which he would finish opponents, often vowing to crawl across the ring or to leave the country if he lost the bout.^[20] Ali admitted he adopted the latter practice from “Gorgeous” George Wagner, a popular professional wrestling champion in the Los Angeles area who drew thousands of fans to his matches as “the man you love to hate”.^[20]

ESPN columnist Ralph Wiley called Ali “The King of Trash Talk”.^[125] In 2013, *The Guardian* said Ali exemplified boxing’s “golden age of trash talking”.^[126] The Bleacher Report called Clay’s description of Sonny Liston smelling like a bear and his vow to donate him to a zoo after he beat him the greatest trash talk line in sports history.^[127]

1.1.7 Legacy

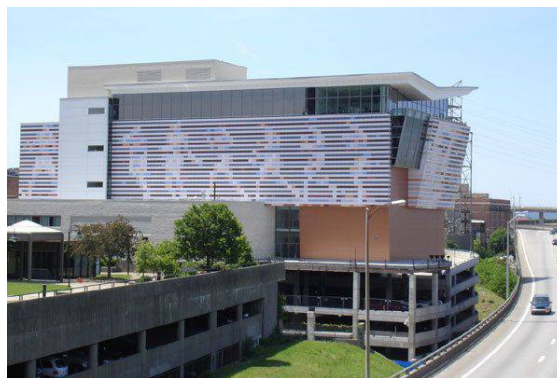


As Mrs. Lonnie Ali looks on, President George W. Bush embraces Muhammad Ali after presenting him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom on November 9, 2005, during ceremonies at the White House.

Muhammad Ali defeated every top heavyweight in his era, which has been called the golden age of heavyweight boxing. Ali was named “Fighter of the Year” by *Ring Magazine* more times than any other fighter, and was involved in more *Ring Magazine* “Fight of the Year” bouts than any other fighter. He is an inductee into the International Boxing Hall of Fame and holds wins over seven other Hall of Fame inductees. He is one of only three boxers to be named “Sportsman of the Year” by *Sports Illustrated*.

In 1978, three years before Ali’s permanent retirement, the Board of Aldermen in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, voted 6–5 to rename Walnut Street to Muhammad Ali Boulevard. This was controversial at the time, as within a week 12 of the 70 street signs were stolen. Earlier that year, a committee of the Jefferson County Public Schools considered renaming Central High School in his honor, but the motion failed to pass. At any rate, in time, Muhammad Ali Boulevard—and Ali himself—came to be well accepted in his hometown.^[128] In 1993, the *Associated Press* reported that Ali was tied with Babe Ruth as the most recognized athlete, out of over 800 dead or alive athletes, in America. The study found that over 97% of Americans over 12 years of age identified both Ali and Ruth.^[129]

He was the recipient of the 1997 Arthur Ashe Courage Award. Two years later, in 1999, the BBC produced a special version of its annual BBC Sports Personality of the Year Award ceremony, and Ali was voted their Sports Personality of the Century,^[130] receiving more votes than the other four contenders combined. On September 13, 1999, Ali was named “Kentucky Athlete of the Century” by the Kentucky Athletic Hall of Fame in ceremonies at the Galt House East.^[131] On January 8, 2005, Muhammad Ali was presented with the Presidential Citizens Medal by President George W. Bush. Later that November, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom at a White House ceremony.^{[132][133]} and the “Otto Hahn Peace Medal in Gold” of the UN Association of Germany (DGfV) in Berlin for his work with the US civil rights movement and the United Nations (December 17, 2005).



The Muhammad Ali Center, alongside Interstate 64 on Louisville’s riverfront

On November 19, 2005 (Ali's 19th wedding anniversary), the \$60 million non-profit Muhammad Ali Center opened in downtown Louisville. In addition to displaying his boxing memorabilia, the center focuses on core themes of peace, social responsibility, respect, and personal growth. On June 5, 2007, he received an honorary doctorate of humanities at Princeton University's 260th graduation ceremony.^[134]

Ali Mall, located in Araneta Center, Quezon City, Philippines, is named after him. Construction of the mall, the first of its kind in the Philippines, began shortly after Ali's victory on a boxing match with Joe Frazier in nearby Araneta Coliseum in 1975. The mall opened in 1976 with Ali personally gracing its opening.^[135]

Ranking in heavyweight history

Ali is generally considered to be one of the greatest heavyweights of all time by boxing commentators and historians. *Ring Magazine*, a prominent boxing magazine, named him number 1 in a 1998 ranking of greatest heavyweights from all eras.^[136]

Ali was named the second greatest fighter in boxing history by ESPN.com behind only welterweight and middleweight great Sugar Ray Robinson.^[137] In December 2007, ESPN listed Ali second in its choice of the greatest heavyweights of all time, behind Joe Louis.^[138]

The Associated Press voted Ali the No. 1 heavyweight of the 20th century in 1999.^[139]

In the media and popular culture

Main article: Muhammad Ali in media and popular culture

As a world champion boxer and social activist, Ali has been the subject of numerous books, films and other creative works.

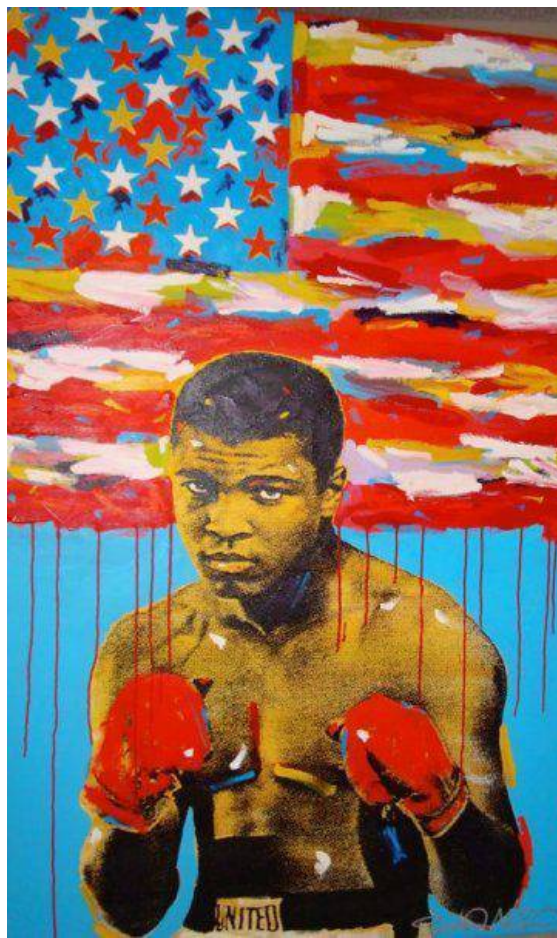
Ali has appeared on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* on 37 different occasions, second only to Michael Jordan.^[140]

Ali had a cameo role in the 1962 film version of *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, and during his exile, he starred in the short-lived Broadway musical, *Buck White* (1969).

In 1963, Ali released an album of spoken word on Columbia Records titled *I Am the Greatest*, and in 1964, he recorded the song "Stand by Me".^{[141][142]}

Ali appeared in the documentary film *Black Rodeo* (1972) riding both a horse and a bull. His autobiography *The Greatest: My Own Story*, written with Richard Durham, was published in 1975.^[143] In 1977 the book was adapted into a film called *The Greatest*, in which Ali played himself and Ernest Borgnine played Angelo Dundee.

The film *Freedom Road*, made in 1978, features Muhammad Ali in a rare acting role as Gideon Jackson, an ex-slave in 1870s Virginia who gets elected to the U.S. Sen-



Pop art painting of Muhammad Ali by John Stango



Ali and Michel, 1979

ate in Washington, D.C., and battles other former slaves and white sharecroppers to keep the land they have tended all their lives. On the set of *Freedom Road* Ali met Canadian singer-songwriter Michel, and subsequently helped create Michel's album entitled *The First Flight of the Gizzelda Dragon*. and the hour-long television show *With Love From Muhammad Ali*.

Ali was the subject of *This Is Your Life* in 1978 when he was surprised by Eamonn Andrews.^[144]

In 1979, Ali guest-starred as himself in an episode of the NBC sitcom *Diff'rent Strokes*.

The Muhammad Ali Effect, named after Ali, is a term that came into use in psychology in the 1980s, as he stated in his autobiography *The Greatest: My Own Story*: “I only said I was the greatest, not the smartest.”^[143] According to this effect, when people are asked to rate their intelligence and moral behavior in comparison to others, people will rate themselves as more moral, but not more intelligent than others.^{[145][146]}

When We Were Kings, a 1996 documentary about the Rumble in the Jungle, won an Academy Award,^[147] and the 2001 biopic *Ali* garnered an Oscar nomination for Will Smith's portrayal of the lead role.^[148] The latter film was directed by Michael Mann, with mixed reviews, the positives given to Smith's portrayal of Ali. Prior to making the film, Smith rejected the role until Ali requested that he accept it. Smith said the first thing Ali told him was: “Man you're almost pretty enough to play me.”^[149]

In 2002, for his contributions to the entertainment industry, Ali was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6801 Hollywood Boulevard.^[150] His star is the only one to be mounted on a vertical surface, out of deference to his request that his name not be walked upon.^{[151][152]}

The Trials of Muhammad Ali, a documentary directed by Bill Siegel that focuses on Ali's refusal of the draft during the Vietnam War, opened in Manhattan on August 23, 2013.^{[153][154]} A made-for-TV movie called *Muhammad Ali's Greatest Fight*, also in 2013, dramatized the same aspect of Ali's life.

In 2015, Ali released his memoir *The Greatest: My Own Story*, which chronicles the battles he faced in and out of the ring. It was edited by Nobel Prize-winning novelist Toni Morrison.

1.1.8 Professional boxing record

1.1.9 Awards and nominations

Double Helix Medal

- 2006: CSHL Double Helix Medal Honoree at the Wayback Machine (archived March 17, 2012)

1.1.10 See also

- Muhammad Ali in media and popular culture
- List of heavyweight boxing champions
- List of North American Muslims
- List of people from the Louisville metropolitan area
- List of WBA world champions

- List of WBC world champions
- Notable boxing families
- Conscientious objector

1.1.11 Notes

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1.1.13 External links

- Official website
- Muhammad Ali at the Internet Movie Database
- Barrow Neurological Institute: Muhammad Ali Parkinson Center
- Professional boxing record for Muhammad Ali from BoxRec
- WLRN: Muhammad Ali: Made in Miami
- Muhammad Ali Interview with Ian Wooldridge (1969) on YouTube
- "Cassius Clay: Before He Was Ali" at the Wayback Machine (archived October 21, 2009) (photo essay), *Life* magazine.
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Chapter 2

Ringside opponents

2.1 Tunney Hunsaker

Tunney Morgan Hunsaker (September 1, 1930 – April 27, 2005) was an American professional boxer who also served as the police chief of Fayetteville, West Virginia.

2.1.1 Law enforcement career

Hunsaker was the youngest police chief in the history of West Virginia at age 27. He served as Fayetteville police chief for 38 years. He was later inducted into the Law Enforcement Hall Of Fame. He was remembered as having performed many humanitarian gestures in his capacity, such as escorting the elderly home at dusk, or operating as a crossing guard to insure the safety of small children, standing on wait for buses entering town, etc. The Sheriff proved an inspiration to the children of Fayetteville. On a lighter note, a hobby of his was to turn the traffic signals off during rush hour and after the high school football games to direct traffic, something that became somewhat of a sport to him and an expected occurrence to residents.

In his youth, Chief Hunsaker served honorably in the United States Air Force, stationed at Lackland AFB in San Antonio, TX.

2.1.2 Boxing career

In 1960, Hunsaker was Cassius Clay's (now Muhammad Ali) first opponent in a professional boxing bout. After the fight Hunsaker said, "Clay was as fast as lightning ... I tried every trick I knew to throw at him off balance but he was just too good". In a thumbnail profile of the fight the following January, young Cassius was reported as having remarked that Hunsaker's style was far different from what Clay had been exposed to as an amateur and Olympian; the young fighter admitted to nervousness going in, and that Hunsaker's aforementioned pro style, had given him trouble.^[1] This respect appears genuine, as it was lasting—in his autobiography, Ali said Hunsaker dealt him one of the hardest body blows he ever took in his career. Ali and Hunsaker became good friends and stayed in touch over the years. Hunsaker said he did not

agree with Ali's decision to refuse military service, but praised him as a great humanitarian and athlete.^[2]

In the fight game, Hunsaker was a small heavyweight, perhaps better suited for light-heavy classification (175 lbs. limit); today, he would most likely compete as a cruiserweight (190 lbs. limit). He fought as a boxer-puncher, by his own telling. Hunsaker once appeared on the undercard at Madison Square Garden. Hunsaker ended up with a record of 17 wins with 15 defeats with 8 wins by way of KO (as of boxrec). His career ended after a boxing-related head injury suffered on April 6, 1962, in Beckley, West Virginia. Although rushed to a Beckley hospital, Hunsaker was in a coma for nine days and suffered the physical effects for the rest of his life. He was 74 when he died after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease.

Professional boxing record

2.1.3 Personal life



Tunney Hunsaker Bridge

In his private life, Hunsaker was active in the Oak Hill Church of the Nazarene for many years, teaching a Sunday School class for fifth and sixth grade boys. He was three times named Sunday School Teacher of the Year. At the time of his death in 2005, he had been married to wife Patricia for over thirty years.

The Fayette Station Bridge carrying County Route 82 over the Kanawha River at the bottom of New River

Gorge has been named for Hunsaker.

2.1.4 References

- [1] uncredited (January 1961). "Glove Action". *The Ring*. XXXIX (12): 66.
- [2] Brunt, Stephen (2002). *Facing Ali*. Guilford, CT: The Lyons Press. p. 301. ISBN 1-58574-829-3.
- [3] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=9362&cat=boxer

2.1.5 External links

Tunney Hunsaker at *Find a Grave*

2.2 Herb Siler

Herb Siler (b. January 5, 1935 Brundidge, Alabama, USA - d. March 25, 2001 Miami) was a heavyweight boxer. He won 15 fights (including seven by the way of knock outs) and lost 12, but did not have any draws. His career started in 1960 and ended in 1967.^[1] Siler lost to Muhammad Ali through a 4th round knockout in 1960.^[2] In 1972 he was convicted for manslaughter and subsequently served a 7-year sentence. His grandson is NFL linebacker Brandon Siler.

2.2.1 Professional boxing record

2.2.2 References

- [1] "Herb Siler". Retrieved January 3, 2009.
- [2] "Muhammad Ali". Retrieved January 3, 2009.
- [3] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=9363&cat=boxer

2.3 Jim Robinson

"Sweet Jimmy" **Jim Robinson** (born 1925) is a retired American boxer from Miami. Robinson fought Muhammad Ali in Miami Beach on Feb. 7, 1961 as a last-minute replacement for Willie Gullatt. Robinson became Ali's fourth professional opponent. His whereabouts and status are currently unknown.

2.3.1 Background

Originally from Kansas City, Missouri,^[1] Robinson was a middleweight boxer who fought up to heavyweight. He was managed by Clyde Killens, a local pool hall owner.

He was often used as a last minute sub on Chris Dundee promotions in Miami-Dade County and was often used as a stepping-stone for upcoming South Florida prospects.

He trained at the famed 5th Street Gym, but lived in the Overtown section of Miami known as Liberty City.

2.3.2 Bout with Ali

On February 7, 1961, Muhammad Ali, then known as Cassius Clay, was scheduled to fight Willie Gullatt in Miami Beach. According to Gullatt, promoter Chris Dundee, Angelo Dundee's brother, offered Ali \$800 and offered Gullatt only \$300 for the fight. Gullatt refused, and didn't show up, instead opting to go out drinking. Dundee then enlisted Robinson to fight Ali. Robinson showed up at Miami Beach Convention Hall with his gear in an old army bag. Ali officially outweighed him by 16.5 pounds and won by knockout at 1:34 of the first round.

Robinson fought for seven more years while compiling a record of 8 wins and 25 losses. He was knocked out 16 times. He retired from boxing in 1963, and he became a fixture in local pool halls and street corners in Liberty City. In 1968 he came out of retirement to fight Kent Green in Miami Beach. At that time Green was the only fighter to have a TKO win over Muhammad Ali (when Ali was an amateur). Green stopped Robinson in under a minute.

2.3.3 Whereabouts unknown

In 1979 *Sports Illustrated* writer/photographer Michael Brennan tracked down Robinson in Miami for what has been his last known interview to date.^[2] Robinson claimed that he only weighed 158 lbs. for his fight with Ali (not 178 as was officially listed). He also stated that he was good friends with Ali and would drive him around in Ali's pink Cadillac. He last saw Ali in 1967.

Currently Robinson's whereabouts are unknown. In 2009, ESPN sports writer Wright Thompson wrote an article about his six-year attempt to find Robinson in the Overtown district of Miami with no success. Muhammad Ali collector Stephen Singer has spent a number of years searching for Robinson, collecting autographs of 49 of Ali's 50 opponents, with Robinson being the lone omission.^[3]

2.3.4 Professional boxing record

2.3.5 References

- [1] *The Milwaukee Sentinel* - 8 Feb 1961
- [2] Ali And His Educators
- [3] Where have you gone, Mr. Robinson?

- [4] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=118939&cat=boxer

Further reading

- Campbell, Janie (Dec 19, 2009). “Boxing History Lost in Overtown”. *WTVJ*.
- Thompson, Wright (December 16, 2009). “Shadow Boxing”. *ESPN.com/Outside the Lines* (Bristol, Connecticut).

2.3.6 External links

- Boxing record

2.4 Willi Besmanoff

William David Besmanoff (October 4, 1932 – October 20, 2010^[1]) was a German boxer who was a heavyweight contender in the 1950s. He was born in Munich, Germany). His father was Jewish American. When Willi was 11, he was imprisoned in the Buchenwald concentration camp for a short time. In the 1950s he moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin and became an American citizen.^[2]

Making his professional debut in 1952, Besmanoff mainly fought in Germany for the first half of his career, before subsequently relocating to the United States. Besmanoff fought many top contenders of the era, including Sonny Liston, Archie Moore, George Chuvalo, Zora Foley, Eddie Machen, Roy Harris, Willie Pastrano and Bob Foster. He was also an early opponent of Cassius Clay. He retired in 1967, with a final record of 51-34-8.

2.4.1 Professional boxing record

2.4.2 References

- [1] Obituary in *The St. Augustine Record*.
- [2] A Salute to Willi Besmanoff.
- [3] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=9371&cat=boxer

2.4.3 External links

- Professional boxing record for Willi Besmanoff from BoxRec

2.5 Sonny Banks

Lucien “Sonny” Banks (June 29, 1940 – May 13, 1965)^[1] was an American boxer best known for being the first fighter to drop a young Muhammad Ali (then Cassius Clay). At the time Banks was a rising prospect and known for a fast sharp left hook.

Banks fought Clay in 1962 and knocked him down for a count, although he lost the match. Banks at the age of 24, died in 1965 from injuries sustained in a 9-round bout against Leotis Martin.

2.5.1 Professional boxing record

2.5.2 References

- [1] Professional boxing record for Sonny Banks from BoxRec
- [2] Boxing record for Sonny Banks. *BoxRec.com*.

- West Side Boxing News: “15 Round: The True Championship Distance”

2.6 Archie Moore

For the baseball player, see Archie Moore (baseball).

Archie Moore (born **Archibald Lee Wright**; December 13, 1916 – December 9, 1998) was an American professional boxer and the longest reigning Light Heavyweight World Champion of all time (December 1952 – May 1962). He had one of the longest professional careers in the history of the sport. Nicknamed “The Mongoose”, and then “The Old Mongoose” in the latter half of his career, Moore holds the record for the most career knockouts (131) in boxing history. Moore was a highly strategic and defensive boxer, with a great chin and bludgeoning power, he ranks #4 on *The Ring's* list of “100 greatest punchers of all time”. Moore is rated by prominent boxing website BoxRec as the greatest pound-for-pound boxer of all-time.^[1] Moore was also a trainer for a short time after retirement. He trained boxers such as Muhammad Ali, George Foreman and James Tillis.

A native of Benoit, Mississippi, Moore was raised in St. Louis, Missouri. A victim of racism for much of his career, Moore was an important figure in the American black community, and became involved in African American causes once his days as a fighter were over. He also established himself as a successful character actor in television and film. Moore died in his adopted home of San Diego, California.

2.6.1 Early life

Born Archibald Lee Wright, the son of Thomas Wright, a farm laborer and drifter, and Lorena Wright. He always insisted that he was born in 1916 in [Collinsville, Illinois](#), but his mother told reporters that he was actually born in 1913 in [Benoit, Mississippi](#). His father abandoned the family when Archie was an infant. Unable to provide for him and his older sister, his mother gave them into the care of an uncle and aunt, Cleveland and Willie Pearl Moore, who lived in [St. Louis, Missouri](#). Archie later explained why he was given their surname: “It was less questions to be called Moore.” He attended all-black schools in St. Louis, including Lincoln High School, although he never graduated. His uncle and aunt provided him with a stable upbringing, but after his uncle died in a freak accident around 1928, Moore began running with a street gang. One of his first thefts was a pair of oil lamps from his home, which he sold so that he would have money to buy boxing gloves. He later recalled of his stealing: “It was inevitable that I would be caught. I think I knew this even before I started, but somehow the urge to have a few cents in my pocket made me overlook this eventuality”. After he was arrested for attempting to steal change from a motorman’s box on a streetcar, he was sentenced to a three-year term at a reform school in [Booneville, Missouri](#). He was released early from the school for good behavior after serving twenty-two months.

Around 1933 Moore joined the [Civilian Conservation Corps](#), working for the forestry division at a camp in [Poplar Bluff, Missouri](#). Having determined to become a boxer, he decided to make his work at the camp a form of training. He later recalled that the other boys constantly kidded him about one daily exercise—standing upright in the bed of a truck as it drove along primitive forest roads, waiting until the last possible moment before ducking or weaving away from tree branches. The captain of the camp permitted him to organize a boxing team, which competed in Golden Gloves tournaments in southern Missouri and Illinois. Many of his fights occurred in a racially charged atmosphere; he later described one of them, against a white boxer named Bill Richardson in [Poplar Bluff](#):

I knocked him down with a volley of head punches about one minute into round one. His brother . . . was the referee. He was furious at me and told me to keep my punches up. Since I had been hitting Bill in the head I would have missed him altogether if I threw my punches any higher. But the referee said I had fouled him. . . . I got steamed at this and offered to fight [the referee], too. I resolved not to hit Bill any place but his head. . . . In the second round I dropped him with a left hook that spun his head like a top. . . . I heard a man at ringside say, “For two cents I’d shoot that nigger.”

After the bout, the boxing team was followed back to camp by a line of cars loaded with angry “townies.” They dispersed only when the camp captain threatened them

with a submachine gun.

Professional boxing career

He turned professional in 1935 and boxed all but one of his 12 bouts that year in [San Diego](#). Moore had eight bouts in 1939, going 5–2 during that span, with one “no contest.” He lost to former [Middleweight](#) Champion and future Hall of Famer [Teddy Yarosz](#) during that time, and his no-contest was against [Jack Coggins](#), in eight rounds. In 1940, Moore made a tour of [Australia](#) and fought in [Melbourne, Tasmania, Adelaide](#) and [Sydney](#). He won all of his seven bouts there, including six by knockout. Upon returning to the United States, he defeated [Pancho Ramirez](#) by a knockout in five but lost to [Shorty Hogue](#) on a six-round decision.

2.6.2 First retirement and comeback

Moore had four fights in 1941, during which he went 2–1–1, with the draw against [Eddie Booker](#). By then, however, he had suffered through several stomach ulcers, with the resulting operations, and he announced his retirement from boxing.

His retirement was brief, however, and by 1942 he was back in the ring. He won his first six bouts that year, including a second round knockout of [Hogue](#) in a rematch, and a ten round decision over [Jack Chase](#). He met [Booker](#) in a rematch, and reached the same conclusion as their first meeting had: another 10 round draw.

In 1943, Moore fought seven bouts, winning five and losing two. He won and then lost the [California State Middleweight](#) title against [Chase](#), both by 15 round decisions, and beat [Chase](#) again in his last bout of that year, in a ten round decision. He also lost a decision to [Aaron Wade](#) that year.

2.6.3 The Atlantic Coast

In 1944, he had nine bouts, going 7–2. His last bout that year marked his debut on the Atlantic Coast, and the level of his opposition began to improve. He beat [Jimmy Hayden](#) by a knockout in five, lost to future Hall of Famer [Charlie Burley](#) by a decision, and to [Booker](#) by a knockout in eight.

He won his first eight bouts of 1945, impressing Atlantic coast boxing experts and earning a fight with future IBHOF enshrinee [Jimmy Bivins](#), who defeated Moore by a knockout in six at [Cleveland](#). He returned to the Eastern Seaboard to fight five more times before that year was over. He met, among others, future IBHOF enshrinee [Holman Williams](#) during that span, losing a ten round decision, and knocking him out in eleven in the rematch.

By 1946, Moore had moved to the light heavyweight di-

vision and he went 5–2–1 that year, beating contender **Curtis Sheppard**, but losing to future World Heavyweight Champion and Hall of Famer **Ezzard Charles** by a decision in ten, and drawing with old nemesis Chase. By then, Moore began complaining publicly that, according to him, none of boxing's world champions would risk their titles fighting him.

1947 was essentially a year of rematches for Moore. He went 7–1 that year, his one loss being to Charles. He beat Chase by a knockout in nine, Sheppard by a decision in ten and Bivins by a knockout in nine. He also defeated **Burt Lytell**, by a decision in ten.

He fought a solid 14 fights in 1948, losing again to Charles by a knockout in nine, losing to Leonard Morrow by a knockout in the first, to **Henry Hall** by a decision in ten and to **Lloyd Gibson** by a disqualification in four. But he also beat **Ted Lowry**, by a decision in ten, and Hall in a rematch, also by decision.

1949 was also a good year for Moore: He had 13 bouts that year, going 12–1. He defeated the *Alabama Kid* twice; by knockout in four and by knockout in three, **Bob Satterfield** by a knockout in three, Bivins by a knockout in eight, future World Light Heavyweight Champion and IBHOF inductee **Harold Johnson** by a decision, **Bob Sikes** by a knockout in three and **Phil Muscato** by a decision. He lost to **Clinton Bacon** by a disqualification in six.

By Moore's standards, 1950 was a vacation year for him: he only had two fights, winning both, including a 10 round decision in a rematch with **Lydell**.

In 1951, Moore boxed 18 times, winning 16, losing one, and drawing one. He went on an *Argentinian* tour, fighting seven times there, winning six and drawing one. In between those seven fights, he found time for a trip to **Montevideo**, **Uruguay**, where he defeated **Vicente Quiroz** by a knockout in six. He knocked out Bivins in nine and split two decisions with Johnson.

2.6.4 World Light Heavyweight Champion

1952 was one of the most important years in Moore's life. After beating Johnson, heavyweight contenders **Jimmy Slade**, **Bob Dunlap**, and **Clarence Henry** and light heavyweight **Clinton Bacon** (knocked out in four in a rematch), Moore was finally given an opportunity at age thirty-six to fight for the title of World Light Heavyweight Champion against future IBHOF honoree **Joey Maxim**.

Maxim had just defeated the great **Sugar Ray Robinson** by a technical knockout in 14 rounds, forcing Robinson to quit in his corner due to heat exhaustion. Against Maxim, Moore consistently landed powerful right hands, hurting him several times en route to a fifteen-round decision. After sixteen long years, he had finally achieved his dream.

He was far from done, however. The next year, Moore

won all nine of his bouts, including a 10 round non title win against then fringe heavyweight contender **Nino Valdez** of **Cuba** and a 15 round decision over Maxim in a rematch to retain the belt. He made two more bouts in **Argentina** before the end of the year.

In 1954, he had only four fights, retaining the title in a third fight with Maxim, who once again went the 15 round distance, and versus Johnson, who he knocked out in 14. He also beat highly ranked heavyweight **Bob Baker**.

In 1955, Moore again beat Valdez, who by that time was the no. 1 heavyweight contender, and defended against **Bobo Olson**, the World Middleweight Champion and future Hall of Famer who was coming off a decision victory over **Joey Maxim**, by a knockout in three.

On September 21, 1955, Moore went up in weight to face future Hall of Famer **Rocky Marciano** for Marciano's Heavyweight Championship. Moore briefly dropped Marciano in the second round (the second and last time Marciano had ever been knocked down), but Marciano recovered and knocked Moore down five times, knocking him out in the ninth to retain the belt. It was Marciano's sixth and last title defense before retiring in 1956.

In 1956, Moore fought mostly as a heavyweight but did retain his Light Heavyweight title with a ten round knockout over **Yolande Pompey** in **London**. He won 11 bouts in a row before challenging again for the World Heavyweight Championship. The title was left vacant by Marciano, but Moore lost to **Floyd Patterson** by a knockout in five (Patterson, yet another future Hall of Famer, himself made history that night, becoming, at the age of 21, the youngest World Heavyweight Champion yet, a record he would hold until 1986).

Moore won all six of his bouts during 1957. Among those wins was an easy 10-round decision over heavyweight contender **Hans Kalbfell** in **Germany**, a knockout in 7 rounds over highly ranked **Tony Anthony** to retain the light heavyweight title, a one-sided 10-round decision over light heavyweight contender **Eddie Cotton** in a non-title bout and a 4th round knockout of future top ten heavyweight contender **Roger Rischer**.

In 1958, Moore had 10 fights, going 9–0–1 during that span. His fight with **Yvon Durelle** in particular was of note: defending his world light heavyweight title in **Montreal**, he was felled three times in round one, and once again in round five, but then dropped Durelle in round 10 and won by a knockout in the 11th.

1959, his last full year as uncontested champion, was another rare low-profile year; in his two fights, he beat **Sterling Davis** by a knockout in three, and then Durelle again, also by a knockout in three, to once again retain his World Light Heavyweight title.

During 1960, Moore was stripped of his World Light Heavyweight title by the **National Boxing Association (NBA)**, but continued to be recognized by most major boxing authorities including the **New York State Athletic**

Commission and *The Ring Magazine*. Moore won three of his four bouts in 1960, one by decision against Buddy Turman in Dallas, Texas, his lone loss coming in a ten-round decision versus Giulio Rinaldi in Rome.

In 1961, he defeated Turman again by decision in Manila, Philippines before defending his Lineal World Light Heavyweight Championship for what would be the last time, beating Rinaldi by a 15 round decision to retain the belt. In his last fight that year, he once again ventured into the heavyweights, and met Pete Rademacher, a man who had made history earlier in his career by becoming the first man ever to challenge for a world title in his first professional bout (when he lost to Patterson by a knockout in six). Moore beat Rademacher by a knockout in nine.

In 1962, the remaining boxing commissions that had continued to back Moore as the World Light Heavyweight Champion withdrew their recognition. He campaigned exclusively as a heavyweight from then on, and beat Alejandro Lavorante by a knockout in 10 and Howard King by a knockout in one round in Tijuana. He then drew against future World Light Heavyweight Champion Willie Pastrano in a 10-round heavyweight contest. Interestingly enough, on the posters advertising that fight, Moore was billed as the "World Light Heavyweight Champion." The bout took place in California, which had not yet withdrawn recognition from Moore at the time the Moore-Pastrano fight was signed. By the time the bout took place, the California commission, like New York, Massachusetts, the EBU and Ring Magazine, had recognized Harold Johnson, who had beaten Doug Jones 16 days earlier, as the new Light Heavyweight Champion. Johnson had reigned as the NBA (WBA) Champion since February 7, 1961.

Then, in his last fight of note, Moore faced a young heavyweight out of Louisville named Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali). Moore had been Clay's trainer for a time, but Clay became dissatisfied and left Moore because of Moore's attempts to change his style and his insistence that Clay do dishes and help clean gym floors.

In the days before the fight, Clay had rhymed that "Archie Moore...Must fall in four." Moore replied that he had perfected a new punch for the match: The Lip-Buttuner.

Nonetheless, as Clay predicted Moore was beaten by a knockout in four rounds. Moore is the only man to have faced both Rocky Marciano and Muhammad Ali.

After one more fight in 1963, a third round knockout win over Mike DiBiase in Phoenix, Moore announced his retirement from boxing, for good.

2.6.5 Final retirement

Despite retiring, Moore couldn't escape the limelight, and received numerous awards and dedications. In 1965, he was given the key to the city of San Diego, California. In

1970, he was named "Man of The Year" by *Listen Magazine*, and received the key to the city of Sandpoint, Ohio.

He was elected in 1985 to the St. Louis city Boxing Hall of Fame and he received the Rocky Marciano Memorial Award in the city of New York in 1988. In 1990, he became a member of the International Boxing Hall Of Fame in Canastota, being one of the original members of that institution.

At one point, the oldest boxer to win the World's Light Heavyweight Championship, he is believed to have been the only boxer who boxed professionally in the eras of Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano and Muhammad Ali. He is one of only a handful of boxers whose careers spanned four decades; his final record was an extraordinary 185 wins, 23 losses, 11 draws and 1 no contest, with 131 official knockouts.

However, at least three of Moore's record 131 knockouts came in less-than-competitive matches against pro wrestlers: "Professor" Roy Shire in 1956, Sterling Davis in 1959 and Mike DiBiase in 1963 (Moore's 131st and final knockout).^[2] All three matches are officially listed as third-round TKO stoppages. But even if one amends Moore's career numbers, he would still hold the record. The second-highest amount of knockouts in boxing history is 128, which belongs to Sam Langford.^[3]

During the 1960s he founded an organization called Any Boy Can, which taught boxing to underprivileged youth in the San Diego area. In 1974 he helped train heavyweight boxer George Foreman for his famous "Rumble in the Jungle" title bout in Zaire against Muhammad Ali. In 1976 he served as an assistant coach for the Nigerian Olympic boxing team. Actively involved in efforts to teach children about the dangers of drug abuse, he worked during the 1980s as a youth boxing instructor for the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, assigned largely to ghettos in San Diego and Los Angeles. "I try to pass on the arts I know: self-control, self-reliance, self-defense," he told a reporter. In the early 1990s he again worked as a trainer for George Foreman.^[4]

2.6.6 Acting career

In 1960, Moore was chosen to play the role of the runaway slave Jim in Michael Curtiz's film adaptation of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, opposite Eddie Hodges as Huck. Moore garnered positive reviews for his sympathetic portrayal of Jim, which some viewers still consider the best interpretation of this much-filmed role.

Moore did not choose to pursue a full-time career as an actor, but he did appear in 1960s films such as *The Carpetbaggers* (1964), *The Hanged Man* (1964) and *The Fortune Cookie* (1966), and on television in episodes of *Family Affair*, *Perry Mason*, *Wagon Train*, *The Reporter*, *Batman* (episode 35) and the soap opera *One Life to Live*.

His later film appearances included the crime film *The Outfit* (1973), as a chef in *Breakheart Pass* (1975) with Charles Bronson, and a cameo role as himself in the 1982 film *Penitentiary II*, along with Leon Isaac Kennedy and Mr. T.

2.6.7 Personal life

Archie Moore had three daughters, Reena and J'Marie and Elizabeth Moore-Stump and four sons, Archie Jr., Hardy, Anthony and D'Angelo.^[5] The marriage of Archie Moore and Elizabeth Thorton produced Archie Jr. and Elizabeth. In 1956, he married Joan Hardy and had five children; Reena, J'Marie, Hardy, Anthony and D'Angelo. They were married until his death in 1998.

In 1997, J'Marie Moore became the first daughter of a famous boxer to herself become a professional boxer.^[6]

2.6.8 Death

Archie Moore died of heart failure in 1998, four days before his 82nd birthday. He was cremated and is interred in a niche at Cypress View Mausoleum and Crematory, in San Diego.

2.6.9 Accolades

- In 1965, Moore was also inducted by the San Diego Hall of Champions into the Breitbard Hall of Fame.^[7]
- In 1980, he was inducted into the World Boxing Hall of Fame.
- In 1990, he was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.^[8]
- In 2002, Archie Moore was inducted into the St. Louis Walk of Fame.^[9]
- In 2006, Moore was inducted into the California Boxing Hall of Fame.
- *The Ring* ranked Moore #4 on its “Best Punchers of all time” list in 2003 and #14 on its list of the “80 Best Fighters of the Last 80 Years.”
- Moore was ranked as the #1 light heavyweight of all-time by the International Boxing Research Organization in 2005.^[10]
- Moore was voted as the #1 light heavyweight of the 20th century by the Associated Press in 1999.^[11]
- Moore is rated the number one pound for pound fighter of all time by Boxrec.^[1]

2.6.10 Professional boxing record

2.6.11 See also

2.6.12 References

- [1] “BoxRec Boxing Records – World, male, P4P”. Retrieved 2015-02-26.
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- [3] “The Knockout- Boxing\’s Homerun | Jose Corpas”. Fightbeat.com. Retrieved 2010-08-22.
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2.6.13 Further reading

- Jake LaMotta; Bert Randolph Sugar; Pete Ehrmann (2004). *The Ageless Warrior: The Life of Boxing Legend Archie Moore* (illustrated ed.). Sports Publishing. ISBN 1-58261-255-2.

2.6.14 External links

- Professional boxing record for Archie Moore from BoxRec

2.7 Doug Jones

Doug Jones (born February 27, 1937, New York City) is a former American heavyweight boxer.^[1]

2.7.1 Boxing career

Doug “Pugilism” Jones started off his career successfully with 18 consecutive wins against mostly lightly regarded opponents, until his first loss occurred at the hands of **Eddie Machen**. He lost his next two fights, and the third a draw. Jones fought for the world light-heavyweight championship against **Harold Johnson** but lost a 15-round decision.

He then moved up to the heavyweight division. Jones won his next two fights against **Bob Foster** (who was in his 9th professional fight) and **Zora Folley**. Jones also split two fights with **Billy Daniels**. His best known fight was against a young **Cassius Clay** in March 1963, when he lost a ten-round decision in front of a sold-out crowd in Madison Square Garden. Many thought Jones deserved the decision, which was loudly booed by the Garden crowd. Of 25 boxing writers at the Garden that night 13 scored it for Jones, 10 favored Clay and 2 called it even.^{[2][3]} *The Ring* selected this as its **Fight of the Year** in 1963.

He continued boxing with limited success, fighting distinguished boxers **George Chuvalo**, **Joe Frazier** and **Ernie Terrell**. Overall, he compiled a record of 30 wins (20 by knockout), 10 losses, and 1 draw. He is widely regarded by the *Boxing Press* as one of the top fighters who never actually won a world title.

2.7.2 Professional boxing record

2.7.3 References

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2.7.4 External links

- Professional boxing record for Doug Jones from *BoxRec*

2.8 Henry Cooper

For other people named Henry Cooper, see *Henry Cooper (disambiguation)*.

Sir Henry Cooper OBE KSG (3 May 1934 – 1 May 2011)^[2] was an English heavyweight boxer known for the sheer power of his left hook, “Enry’s ‘Ammer”, and his knockdown of the young **Muhammad Ali**. Cooper held the **British**, **Commonwealth** and **European** heavyweight titles several times throughout his career, and unsuccessfully challenged Ali for the world heavyweight championship in 1966.

Following his retirement from the sport, Cooper continued his career as a television and radio personality and was enormously popular in Britain: he was the first (and is today one of just four people) to twice win the public vote for **BBC Sports Personality of the Year Award** and is thus far the only boxer to be awarded a knighthood.

2.8.1 Biography

Cooper was born in **Lambeth**, London^[3] to Henry and Lily Cooper. With identical twin brother, George (1934–2010),^[3] and elder brother **Bern**,^[1] he grew up in a council house on Farmstead Road on the **Bellingham Estate** in South East London. During the **Second World War** they were evacuated to **Lancing** on the **Sussex coast**.^[1]

Around 1942, their father, Henry Senior, was called up to serve in the war; the rest of the family did not see him again for almost three years. The twins attended **Athlney Road School** in **Lewisham**. The Cooper brothers were particularly close growing up and, in his biography, Henry talks of how they came to each other’s aid when things turned nasty in the school playground. One particular incident landed the young Henry his first knockout in the playground. At school, the only subject that seemed to interest Henry was history, where he enjoyed acting out scenarios.

Life was tough in the latter years of the **Second World War**, and London life especially brought many dangers during the **blackout**. Henry took up many jobs, including a paper round before school and made money out of recycling golf balls to the clubhouse on the **Beckenham course**. All three of the Cooper brothers excelled in sport, with George and Henry exercising talents particularly in football and also cricket.^[4]

George Cooper, Henry’s twin, who boxed as **Jim Cooper**, died on 11 April 2010 at the age of 75.^[3]

Henry Cooper served his **National Service** in the **Royal Army Ordnance Corps**, where he was recruited for his boxing ability.^[5]

Although Cooper is best known for knocking down **Muhammad Ali**, he defeated a string of well-known

heavyweights during his career, including; Zora Folley, Roy Harris, Karl Mildenerger, Alex Miteff, Wayne Bethea, Brian London, Joe Erskine, Jose Manuel Urtaín, Piero Tomasoni, Dick Wipperman, Dick Richardson, Billy Walker, Tony Hughes, Jack Bodell, Jefferson Davis and Gawie De Clerk. Cooper died on 1 May 2011 at his son's house in Oxted, Surrey, after a long illness,^[2] 2 days before his 77th birthday.

2.8.2 Boxing career

Style

Although Cooper was left-handed, he used the “orthodox” stance, with his left hand and foot forward, rather than the reversed “southpaw” stance more usually adopted by a left-handed boxer. Opponents were thus hit hardest with left handed punches which Cooper could throw from his front hand, closest to the opponent. Cooper's left hook has been described by some as the best of any heavyweight. Certainly, for a man of around 13.5 stone fighting weight, it was outstanding. At its most effective, the so-called left hook had an upward uppercut-like trajectory; frequently resulting in opponents being knocked out. A formidable left jab completed his offensive repertoire; often combined to 'hook off the jab'.^{[1][6]} He generally tried to force the action in his bouts, a crowd pleasing style which won him many supporters. After developing a left shoulder problem in the latter half of his career, Cooper adjusted to put more stress on right-handed punches which he had hitherto neglected.^[6]

Early bouts

Cooper was often regarded as the most popular of all English boxers, and was affectionately known in the UK as: “Our 'Enery”. He started his boxing career in 1949, as an amateur with the Eltham Amateur Boxing Club, and won seventy-three of eighty-four contests. At the age of seventeen, he won the first of two ABA light-heavyweight titles and, before serving in the Army for his two years' National Service, represented Britain in the 1952 Olympics (outpointed in the second stage by Russian Anatoli Petrov). Henry and his twin brother, George (boxing under the name Jim Cooper) turned professional together under the management of Jim Wicks, nicknamed 'The Bishop' because of his benign nature, which was a considerable contrast to the leading promoter of the time. Wicks never allowed his boxer to be the victim of a mis-match. When promoters were trying to match Henry with Sonny Liston Wicks said: “I would not allow 'Enery into the same room as him, let alone the same ring.”

Henry was at one time the British, European and Commonwealth heavyweight champion. His early title challenges were unsuccessful, losing to Joe Bygraves for

the Commonwealth belt (KO 9), Ingemar Johansson for the European belt (KO 5) and the undersized but highly skilled Joe Erskine (PTS 15) for the British and Commonwealth. He then won on points over highly rated contender Zora Folley, and took the British and Commonwealth belts from new champion Brian London, in a 15-round decision in January 1959. The winner of the fight was pencilled in to get a shot at Floyd Patterson's heavyweight title, but Cooper turned down the chance (but fought against Patterson later) and London fought and lost against Patterson in May 1959. Cooper continued to defend his British and Commonwealth belts against all comers, including Dick Richardson (KO 5), Joe Erskine (TKO 5 and TKO 12), Johnny Prescott (TKO 10), and Brian London again (PTS 15), although he suffered a setback when losing a rematch with Folley by a second round KO.^[7]

Muhammad Ali

Cooper twice fought Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Clay), firstly in a non-title fight in 1963 at Wembley Stadium. Cooper did not have a trainer at that time and his own regime led to his losing weight; he later averred that lead was inserted in his boots for the weigh-in and estimated his true weight to have been 12 stone 12 lb (81 kg),^[8] making him 27 pounds lighter than Clay. Commentator Harry Carpenter remarked during the introductions on the difference in size between the boxers. Clay's mobility, fast reflexes, height and unorthodox defensive tactic of pulling back from punches made him a frustratingly elusive opponent; some of Cooper's work during the contest has been described as 'very near the knuckle' with Clay later complaining of being repeatedly hit on the break.^[6] In the dying seconds of the fourth round, Cooper felled Clay with an upward angled version of his trademark left hook, “Enry's 'Ammer”. Unfortunately for Cooper, his opponent's armpit caught in the ropes going down, which prevented his head from striking the canvas covered boards which made up the floor of the ring (something which could easily have knocked him unconscious).^[6]

Clay stood up and started slowly towards Angelo Dundee who – in violation of the rules – guided him into the corner. At first Dundee talked and slapped Clay's legs, but after a still-dazed Clay misunderstood and tried to get off the stool Dundee used smelling salts in a serious violation of the rules. (British rules did not allow any stimulant but water.)^[9] Dundee has since claimed to have opened a small tear in one of Clay's gloves and told the referee that his fighter needed a new pair of gloves, thus delaying the start of the 5th round. Cooper has always insisted that this delay lasted anywhere from 3-5 seconds^[10] according to the footage, and this did not deny him the chance to try to knock Clay out while he was still dazed. In tapes of the fight it seems Clay received only an extra six seconds (although there are still doubters who think

a longer delay was edited out) and the gloves were not replaced.^{[11][12][13]} Cooper started the 5th round aggressively, attempting to make good his advantage, but a recovered Clay effectively countered and Cooper was hit high on the face with a hard right which opened a severe cut under his eye; referee Tommy Little was forced to stop the fight. Clay won.^[14]

After this fight, a spare pair of gloves was always required at ringside. What is certain, however, is that Dundee held smelling salts under Clay's nose in an effort to revive his man, which was illegal.^[15] Clay was obviously impressed by the knockdown and on the 40th anniversary of the fight telephoned Cooper to reminisce. Clay, who had changed his name to Muhammad Ali in 1964, later said on British television that Cooper "had hit him so hard that his ancestors in Africa felt it". In 1966 Cooper fought Ali, now world heavyweight champion, for a second time at *Highbury*.^[16] However Ali was now alert to the danger posed by Cooper's left and more cautious than he had been in the previous contest; he held Cooper in a vice-like grip during clinches, and when told to break leapt backward several feet.^[6] Accumulated scar tissue around Cooper's eyes made him more vulnerable than in the previous meeting and a serious cut was opened by Ali, which led to the fight being stopped, Cooper again suffering a technical knockout when he was ahead on the scorecards.^[6]

Last fights

After the loss to Ali, Cooper fought former heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson, but was counted out in the fourth. After that he went undefeated until the final fight of his career, and made more defences of his British and Commonwealth titles against *Jack Bodell* (TKO 2 and PTS 15) and *Billy Walker* (TKO 6). In 1968 Cooper added the European crown to his domestic titles with a win over *Karl Mildenerger*, and later made two successful defences of his title.

In his last fight, in May 1971, a 36-year-old Cooper faced 21-year-old *Joe Bugner*, one of the biggest heavyweights in the world at the time, for the British, European and Commonwealth belts. Referee *Harry Gibbs* awarded the fight to Bugner by the now abolished quarter of a point margin. It remains one of boxing's most controversial decisions. An audience mainly composed of Cooper fans did not appreciate the innately cautious Bugner, and the decision was booed with commentator *Harry Carpenter* asking, "How can they take away the man's titles like this?"^[17] Cooper announced his retirement shortly afterwards. A controversy followed, with an accusation that points awarded on Gibbs's scorecard had been changed. Gibbs said the allegation was completely untrue. Cooper refused to speak to Gibbs for several years, but eventually agreed to shake his hand for charity^[18] six months before Gibbs died.

Opinion on modern boxers

In Cooper's later years, he retired from commentary on the sport as he became "disillusioned with boxing", wanting "straight, hard and fast boxing that he was used to from his times."^[19] While acknowledging that he was from a different era and would not be fighting as a heavyweight today, Cooper was nonetheless critical of the trend for heavyweights to bulk up as he thought it made for one-paced and less entertaining contests.^[20] In his final year, he said plainly that he did not "think boxing is as good as it was", naming *Joe Calzaghe*, *Ricky Hatton* and *Amir Khan* as "the best of their era", but asserting that "if you match them up with the champions of thirty or forty years ago I don't think they're as good".^[21]

2.8.3 Life outside boxing

After his retirement from boxing Henry Cooper maintained a high public profile with appearances in the BBC quiz show *A Question of Sport* and various advertisements, most famously in those for Brut aftershave, which have been credited with removing a lingering suspicion among the British that men who wore cologne were effeminate.^[20] Although generally a traditionalist,^[20] Cooper was officially the co-founder of the Anti-Nazi League, a largely left-wing campaign focused on far-right groups which opposed immigration.^[22] He was also a frequent and popular guest at charity fund-raising events.^[23] He appeared as boxer *John Gully* in the 1975 film *Royal Flash* and in his latter years featured in a series of UK public service announcements urging vulnerable groups to go to their doctor for vaccination against influenza called *Get your Jab in First!*^[24]

Cooper had become a 'name' at *Lloyd's of London*, a supposedly 'blue chip' investment, but in the 1990s he was reportedly one of those who suffered enormous personal losses because of the unlimited liability which a 'name' was then responsible for, and he was forced to sell his hard won Lonsdale belts.^[20] Subsequently, Cooper's enduring popularity as an after dinner speaker provided a source of income, and he was in most respects a picture of contentment although becoming more subdued in the years following the death of his wife.^{[20][23]}

Considering his long career, Henry Cooper had suffered relatively little boxing-related damage to his health, apart from "a bit of arthritis", remaining an imposing figure into his seventies; in the words of one journalist, "the living manifestation of an age of tuxedos in ringside seats, *Harry Carpenter* commentaries, sponge buckets and 'seconds out'".^[21] He lived in *Hildenborough, Kent*,^[25] and he was the president of *Nizels Golf Club* in the town until his death.^{[2][20]}

Cooper was married to *Albina Genepri*,^[26] an Italian Catholic,^[26] from 1960 until her death from a heart attack aged 71^[25] in 2008.^[1] He converted to her faith.^[26]

He was survived by their sons, Henry Marco and John Pietro,^[1] and two grandchildren.^[21] He left £747,098.^[25] In an interview published a few days after her death, Cooper described Albina, who “hated” his sport, as “an ideal wife for a boxer”, never grumbling about his long absences before big fights and inviting journalists in for tea while they waited for Cooper to get out of bed the morning after bouts.^[21]

2.8.4 Awards and honours

Cooper was the first to win the BBC Sports Personality of the Year award twice (in 1967 and 1970) and one of only three two-time winners in the award’s history (the others being Nigel Mansell in 1986 and 1992 and Damon Hill in 1994 and 1996). Cooper was given the award in 1967 for going unbeaten throughout the year. One of the most memorable fights of the year was his defeat of challenger Jack Bodell in June. His second award came in 1970, when Cooper had become the British, Commonwealth and European heavyweight champion, cementing his reputation as one of the greatest post-war British boxers. He is the only British boxer to win three Lonsdale Belts outright.

Cooper was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1969, awarded a Papal Knight-hood in 1978, and was knighted in 2000. He is also celebrated as one of the great Londoners in the “London Song” by Ray Davies on his 1998 album *The Storyteller*.^{[26][27][28]}

He was the subject of *This Is Your Life* in 1970 when he was surprised by Eamonn Andrews at Thames Television’s Euston Road Studios.

2.8.5 Professional boxing record

2.8.6 References

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2.8.7 External links

- Remembering Clay v Cooper East Side Boxing, 14 November 2006
- Professional boxing record for Henry Cooper from BoxRec
- Henry Cooper's appearance on This Is Your Life

2.9 Sonny Liston

Charles L. "Sonny" Liston (died December 30, 1970) was an American professional boxer known for his toughness, punching power and intimidating appearance. A long-avoided contender, he became world heavyweight champion in 1962 by knocking out Floyd Patterson in the first round, repeating the knockout in a defense of the title.

Although widely regarded as unbeatable, Liston lost the title in 1964 to 7–1 underdog Muhammad Ali. Controversy followed with claims he had been drinking heavily the night before the fight. In the rematch Liston suffered a shocking first round knock-out that led to unresolved suspicions of a fix. He was still a world-ranked boxer when he died in mysterious circumstances. Underworld connections—along with his unrecorded date of birth—added to the enigma. *The Ring* magazine ranked Liston as the seventh greatest heavyweight of all time.

2.9.1 Early life

Family

Charles "Sonny" Liston was born into a sharecropping family who farmed the poor land of Morledge Plantation near Johnson Township, St. Francis County, Arkansas. His father, Tobe Liston, was in his mid-40s when he and his wife, Helen Baskin, who was almost 30 years younger than Tobe, moved to Arkansas from Mississippi in 1916. Helen had one child before she married Tobe, and Tobe had 13 children with his first wife. Tobe and Helen had 12 children together. Sonny was the second youngest child.^{[3][4]}

Date of birth

There is no record of Liston's birth. His family, but not Sonny Liston, can be found in the 1930 census, and in the 1940 census he was listed as 10 years old.^{[5][6]} It has been suggested Liston may not have known what year he was born, as he was not precise on the matter. He finally settled on a date of birth of May 8, 1932 for official purposes but by the time he won the world title an aged appearance added credence to rumors that he was actually several years older.^{[6][7][8][9][10]}

Youth

Tobe Liston inflicted whippings so severe on Sonny that the scars were still visible decades later. "The only thing my old man ever gave me was a beating," Liston said.^[11] Helen Baskin moved to St. Louis, Missouri, with some of her children, leaving Liston—aged around 13, according to his later reckonings—in Arkansas with his father. Sonny thrashed the pecans from his brother-in-law's tree and sold them in Forrest City. With the proceeds he traveled to St. Louis and reunited with his mother and siblings. Liston tried going to school but quickly left after jeers about his illiteracy; the only employment he could obtain was sporadic and exploitative.^[3]

Liston turned to crime and led a gang of toughs who committed muggings and armed robberies. He became known to the St. Louis police as the "Yellow Shirt Bandit", due to the shirt he wore during robberies. Liston was caught in January 1950. He gave his age as 20, while the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat* reported that he was 22.^[3] Liston was convicted and sentenced to five years in Missouri State Penitentiary. His time in prison started on June 1, 1950.^[7]

Liston never complained about prison, saying he was guaranteed three meals every day.^[12] The athletic director at Missouri State Penitentiary, Rev. Alois Stevens, suggested to Liston that he try boxing, and his obvious aptitude, along with an endorsement from Stevens, who was also a priest, aided Liston in getting an early parole. Stevens organized a sparring session with a professional heavyweight named Thurman Wilson to showcase Liston's potential. After two rounds, Wilson had taken enough. "Better get me out of this ring, he is going to kill me!" he exclaimed.^[13]

2.9.2 Amateur boxing career

After he was released from prison on October 31, 1952, Liston had a brief amateur career which spanned less than a year. Liston captured the Chicago Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions on March 6, 1953, with a victory over 1952 Olympic Heavyweight Champion Ed Sanders. He then outpointed Julius Griffin, winner of the New York Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions, to capture the Intercity Golden Gloves Championship on March 26. Liston was dropped in the first round, but he came back to control the next two rounds and had Griffin hanging on at the end.

Liston competed in the 1953 National Amateur Athletic Union Tournament and lost in the quarterfinals to 17-year-old Jimmy McCarter on April 15. Liston would later employ McCarter as a sparring partner.^[14]

Liston boxed in an International Golden Gloves competition at Kiel Auditorium in St. Louis on June 23, and knocked out Hermann Schreiber of West Germany at 2:16 of the first round. The previous month,

Schreibauer had won a bronze medal in the *European Championships*.^[15] At this time, the head coach of the St. Louis Golden Gloves team, Tony Anderson, stated that Liston was the strongest fighter he had ever seen.

2.9.3 Professional boxing career

Liston signed a contract in September 1953, exclaiming: “Whatever you tell me to do, I’ll do.”^[13] The only ones who had been willing to put up the necessary money for him to turn professional were close to underworld figures, and Liston supplemented his income by working for racketeers as an intimidator-enforcer. The connections to organized crime were an advantage early in his career, but were later used against him.^[16]

Liston made his professional debut on September 2, 1953, knocking out Don Smith in the first round in St. Louis, where he fought his first five bouts. Though not particularly tall for a heavyweight at 6 ft 0.5 in (1.84 m), he had an exceptionally powerful physique and disproportionate reach at 84 inches (2.13 m)^{[1][2]} Liston’s fists measured 15 inches (38 cm) around, the largest of any heavyweight champion. *Sports Illustrated* writer Mort Sharnik said his hands “looked like cannonballs when he made them into fists.” Liston’s noticeably more muscular left arm, crushing left jab and powerful left hook lent credence to the widely held belief that he was left-handed but utilized an orthodox stance.

Early in his career, Liston faced capable opponents. In his sixth bout, he faced John Summerlin (18-1-2) on national television and won by an eight-round decision. In his next fight, he had a rematch with Summerlin and again won an eight-round decision. Both fights were in Summerlin’s hometown of *Detroit, Michigan*.^[17]

Liston suffered his first defeat in his eighth fight on September 7, 1954, losing against Marty Marshall, a journeyman with an awkward style. In the third round, Marshall nailed Liston—reportedly while he was laughing—and broke his jaw. A stoic Liston finished the fight but lost by an eight-round split decision. On April 21, 1956, Liston defeated Marshall in a rematch, dropping him four times en route to a sixth-round knockout. They had a rubber match on March 6, 1956, which Liston won by a lopsided ten-round unanimous decision.

Liston’s criminal record, compounded by a personal association with a notorious labor racketeer, led to the police stopping him on sight, and he began to avoid main streets. On May 5, 1956, a cop confronted Liston and a friend about a cab parked near Liston’s home. Liston assaulted the officer, breaking his knee and gashing his face. He also took his gun. Liston claimed the officer used racial slurs. A widely publicized account of Liston resisting arrest—even after nightsticks were allegedly broken over his skull—added to the public perception of him as a nightmarish “monster” who was impervious to punishment. He was paroled after serving six months of

a nine-month sentence and prohibited from boxing during 1957. After repeated overnight detention by the St. Louis police and a thinly veiled threat to his life, Liston left for *Philadelphia*.^[18]

In 1958, Liston returned to boxing. He won eight fights that year, six by knockout. Liston also got a new manager in 1958: Joseph “Pep” Barone, who was a front man for mobsters *Frankie Carbo* and *Frank “Blinky” Palermo*. The year 1959 was a banner one for Liston: after knocking out contender *Mike DeJohn* in six rounds, he faced *Cleveland Williams*, a fast-handed fighter who was billed as the hardest-hitting heavyweight in the world. Against Williams, Liston showed durability, power and skill, nullifying Williams’ best work before stopping him in the third round. This victory is regarded by some as Liston’s most impressive performance. He rounded out the year by stopping *Nino Valdez* and *Willi Besmanoff*.

In 1960, Liston won five more fights, including a rematch with Williams, who lasted only two rounds. Liston’s physique was artificially enhanced with towels under his robe when he entered the ring. *Roy Harris*, who had gone 13 rounds with *Floyd Patterson* in a title match, was crushed in one round by Liston. Top contender *Zora Folley* was stopped in three rounds and the run of knockouts led to Liston being touted as a “champion in waiting.”

Liston’s streak of nine straight knockout victories ended when he won a unanimous twelve-round decision against *Eddie Machen* on September 7, 1960. Machen’s mobility enabled him to go the distance. However, Machen’s taunting and his spoiling tactics of dodging and grappling—at one point almost heaving Liston over the ropes—so alienated the audience that Liston received unaccustomed support from the crowd.^[19] Before his bout with Liston, *Muhammad Ali* consulted Machen and was advised that the key to success was to make Liston lose his temper.^[19]

2.9.4 Boxing style

Writer *Gilbert Rogin* assessed Liston’s style and physique after his win over *Foley*. He said that Liston was not quick with his hand- or foot-work, that he relied too much on his ability to take a punch, and that he could be vulnerable to an opponent with more hand speed. “But can he hit!” Rogin wrote. “There is power in both his left and his right, even though the fists move with the languor of motoring royalty or as if passing through a gaseous envelope more dense than air.” Rogin called Liston’s body “awesome—arms like fence posts, thighs like silos.” His defense was described as “the gate-crossing of arms a la *Archie Moore*.”^[20]

2.9.5 Title challenge delay

Liston became the No. 1 contender in 1960, but the handlers of World Heavyweight Champion **Floyd Patterson** refused to give him a shot at the title because of Liston's links to organized crime.^[21] Ironically, Patterson's manager, **Cus D'Amato**, associated with racketeers and had his manager's license revoked by the **New York State Athletic Commission** for alleged misconduct in connection with the **Floyd Patterson-Ingemar Johansson** title fight in June 1959.^[22]

Civic leaders were also reluctant, worrying that Liston's unsavory character would set a bad example to youth. The **NAACP** had urged Patterson not to fight Liston, fearing that a Liston victory would hurt the civil rights movement.^[23] Many African-Americans disdained Liston. Asked by a young white reporter why he wasn't fighting for freedom in the South, Liston deadpanned, "I ain't got no dog-proof ass."^[24] However, in the aftermath of the **16th Street Baptist Church** bombing, Liston broke off a European boxing exhibition tour to return home and was quoted as saying he was "ashamed to be in America."^[25]

United States President **John F. Kennedy** also did not want Patterson to fight Liston. When Patterson met with the president in January 1962, Kennedy suggested that Patterson avoid Liston, citing Justice Department concerns over Liston's ties to organized crime.^[26]

Jack Dempsey spoke for many when he was quoted as saying that **Sonny Liston** should not be allowed to fight for the title. Liston angrily responded by questioning whether Dempsey's failure to serve in **World War I** qualified him to moralize.^[27] Frustrated, Liston changed his management in 1961 and applied pressure through the media by remarking that Patterson, who had faced mostly white challengers since becoming champion, was drawing the color line against his own race.^[28]

Liston vs. Patterson

Patterson finally signed to meet Liston for the world title on September 25, 1962, in **Comiskey Park** in **Chicago, Illinois**.^[29] Leading up to the fight, Liston was an 8-5 betting favorite, though many picked Patterson to win. In an **Associated Press** poll, 64 of 102 reporters picked Patterson. *Sports Illustrated* predicted a Patterson victory in 15 rounds, stating: "Sonny has neither Floyd's speed nor the versatility of his attack. He is a relatively elementary, one-track fighter." Former champions **James J. Braddock**, **Jersey Joe Walcott**, **Ezzard Charles**, **Rocky Marciano** and **Ingemar Johansson** all picked Patterson to win. **Muhammad Ali** (at the time a rising contender named **Cassius Clay**) predicted a knockout by Liston in the first five rounds.

The fight turned out to be a mismatch. Liston, with a 25-pound weight advantage (214 lb (97.07 kg) to 189 lb

(85.73 kg)), knocked out Patterson at 2:06 of the first round, putting him down for the count with a powerful left hook to the jaw. *Sports Illustrated* writer **Gilbert Rogin** wrote: "that final left hook crashed into Patterson's cheek like a diesel rig going downhill, no brakes." It was the third-fastest knockout in a world heavyweight title fight and the first time the champion had been knocked out in round one.

Rogin wrote that Patterson backers expected him to "go inside on Liston, fire away and then run like a thief in the night. He would not close in until the accumulated inside damage and Liston's own frustration had sapped the challenger's strength and will." Patterson's mistake was that he "did not punch enough and frequently tried to clinch with Liston....In these feckless clinches he only managed to tie up one of Liston's arms. A grateful Liston found there was no need to give chase. The victim sought out the executioner." Rogin discounted speculation that Patterson had thrown the fight, writing: "The genesis of all this wide-eyed theorizing and downright baloney was the fact that many spectators failed to see the knockout blows."^[30]^[31]

Heavyweight Champion of the World

On winning the Heavyweight Championship of the World, Liston had a speech prepared for the crowd that friends had assured him would meet him at the Philadelphia airport. But upon arrival, Liston was met by only a handful of reporters and public relations staff. Writer **Jack McKinney** said, "I watched Sonny. His eyes swept the whole scene....You could feel the deflation, see the look of hurt in his eyes....He had been deliberately snubbed. Philadelphia wanted nothing to do with him."

During an era when white journalists still described black sportsmen in stereotypes, Liston had long been a target of racially charged slurs; he was called a "gorilla" and "a jungle beast" in print. **Larry Merchant**, then a writer with the *Philadelphia Daily News*, wrote: "A celebration for Philadelphia's first heavyweight champ is now in order....**Emily Post** would probably recommend a ticker-tape parade. For confetti we can use torn-up arrest warrants." He also wrote that Liston's win over Patterson proved that "in a fair fight between good and evil, evil must win." Some writers thought Liston brought bad press on himself by a surly and hostile attitude toward journalists. He also had a reputation for bullying people such as porters and waitresses.^[32]

Liston's run-ins with the police had continued in Philadelphia. He particularly resented a 1961 arrest by a black patrolman for loitering, claiming to have merely been signing autographs and chatting with fans outside a drug store.^[33] One month later, Liston was accused of impersonating a police officer by using a flashlight to wave down a female motorist in **Fairmount Park**, although all charges were later dropped. Subsequently, Lis-

ton spent some months in Denver where a Catholic priest who acted as his spiritual adviser attempted to help bring his drinking under control. After he won the title, Liston relocated to Denver permanently, saying, "I'd rather be a lamppost in Denver than the mayor of Philadelphia."^[24]

Liston vs. Patterson II Patterson and Liston had a rematch clause in their contract. Patterson wanted a chance to redeem himself, so they had a rematch on July 22, 1963, in Las Vegas, Nevada. Patterson, a 4-1 betting underdog, was knocked down three times and counted out at 2:10 of the first round. The fight lasted four seconds longer than the first one.^[24] Liston's victory was loudly booed. "The public is not with me. I know it," Liston said afterward. "But they'll have to swing along until somebody comes to beat me."^[32]

Liston vs. Ali

Main article: Muhammad Ali vs. Sonny Liston

Liston made his second title defense against Muhammad Ali—at the time Cassius Clay—on February 25, 1964, in Miami Beach, Florida. Liston was a 7-1 betting favorite. In a pre-fight poll, 43 of 46 sportswriters picked Sonny Liston to win by knockout. Some were surprised during the referee's instructions to see that Ali was a couple of inches taller than Liston, the so-called "Big Bear."

Liston charged Ali at the opening bell, looking to end the fight quickly and decisively. However, Ali's superior speed and movement were immediately evident, as he slipped most of Liston's lunging punches, making the champion look awkward. Ali clearly gained confidence as the round progressed. He hit Liston with a combination that electrified the crowd with about 30 seconds left in the round and began scoring repeatedly with his left jab (the round lasted an extra 20 seconds because referee Barney Felix didn't hear the bell).

Liston settled down somewhat in round two. At one point, he cornered Ali against the ropes and hit him with a hard left hook. Ali later confessed that he was hurt by the punch, but Liston failed to press his advantage. Two of the official scorers awarded the round to Liston and the other had it even.

In the third round, Ali began to take control of the fight. At about 30 seconds into the round, he hit Liston with several combinations, causing a bruise under Liston's right eye and a cut under his left, which eventually required eight stitches to close. It was the first time in his career that Liston had been cut. At one point in this attack, Liston's knees buckled and he almost went down as he was driven to the ropes.^[34] A clearly angered Liston rallied at the end of the round, as Ali seemed tired, and delivered punishing shots to Ali's body. It was probably Liston's best moment in the entire fight.^[35] Sitting on his stool be-

tween rounds, Liston was breathing heavily as his cornermen worked on his cut.

During the fourth round, Ali coasted, keeping his distance. However, when he returned to his corner, he started complaining that there was something burning in his eyes and he could not see. "I didn't know what the heck was going on," Angelo Dundee, Ali's trainer, recalled on an NBC special 25 years later. "He said, 'cut the gloves off. I want to prove to the world there's dirty work afoot.' And I said, 'whoa, whoa, back up baby. C'mon now, this is for the title, this is the big apple. What are you doing? Sit down!' So I get him down, I get the sponge and I pour the water into his eyes trying to cleanse whatever's there, but before I did that I put my pinkie in his eye and I put it into my eye. It burned like hell. There was something caustic in both eyes." Biographer Wilfrid Sheed wrote in his book, *Muhammad Ali: A Portrait in Words and Photographs*, that Ali's protests were heard by ringside members of the Nation of Islam who initially suspected Dundee had blinded his fighter and that the trainer deliberately wiped his own eyes with the corner sponge to demonstrate to Ali's approaching bodyguards that he had not intentionally blinded him.

The commotion wasn't lost on referee Barney Felix, who was walking toward Ali's corner. Felix later said Ali was seconds from being disqualified.^[36] The challenger, his arms held high in surrender, was demanding that the fight be stopped and Dundee, fearing the fight might indeed be halted, gave his charge a one-word order: "Run!"

Many theorized that a substance used on Liston's cuts by Joe Pollino, his cutman, may have inadvertently caused the irritation.^[37]

Ali later said in round five he could only see a faint shadow of Liston during most of the round, but by circling and moving frantically he managed to avoid Liston and somehow survive. At one point, Ali was wiping his eyes with his right hand while extending his left arm—"like a drunk leaning on a lamppost" Bert Sugar wrote—to keep Liston at bay.^[38] By the sixth round, Ali's sight had cleared, and a clearly enraged Ali fought a blisteringly aggressive round landing combinations of punches at all angles seemingly at will.^[39]

Liston failed to answer the bell for the seventh round, and Ali was declared the winner by technical knockout. It was the first time since 1919—when Jack Dempsey defeated Jess Willard—that a World Heavyweight Champion had quit on his stool. Liston said he quit because of a shoulder injury. Dr. Alexander Robbins, chief physician for the Miami Beach Boxing Commission, diagnosed Liston with a torn tendon in his left shoulder. However, David Remnick, for his book, *King of the World: Muhammad Ali and the Rise of an American Hero*, spoke with one of Liston's cornermen, who told him that Liston could have continued: "[The shoulder] was all BS. We had a return bout clause with Clay, but if you say your guy just quit, who is gonna get a return bout. We cooked up that

shoulder thing on the spot.”^[40] Hall of Fame matchmaker Teddy Brenner also disputed the shoulder injury, claiming he saw Liston use the same arm to throw a chair in his dressing room after the match.^[41]

Liston vs. Ali II

Liston trained hard for the rematch, which was scheduled to take place November 13, 1964, in Boston, Massachusetts. *Time* magazine said Liston had worked himself into the best shape of his career. However, there were again rumors of alcohol abuse in training.^[42] The extent to which Liston’s heavy drinking and possible drug use may have contributed to his surprisingly poor performances against Ali is not known.^[11]

Three days before the fight, Ali needed emergency surgery for a strangulated hernia. The bout would need to be delayed by six months.^[43] The new date was set for May 25, 1965. But as it approached, there were fears that the promoters were tied to organized crime and Massachusetts officials, most notably Suffolk County District Attorney Garrett Byrne, began to have second thoughts. Byrne sought an injunction blocking the fight in Boston because Inter-Continental Promotions was promoting the fight without a Massachusetts license. Inter-Continental said local veteran Sam Silverman was the promoter. On May 7, backers of the rematch ended the court battle by pulling the fight out of Boston.^[44] The promoters needed a new location quickly, whatever the size, to rescue their closed circuit television commitment around the country. Governor John H. Reed of Maine stepped forward, and within a few hours, the promoters had a new site: Lewiston, Maine, a mill town with a population of about 41,000 located 140 miles (230 km) north of Boston.

The ending of the fight remains one of the most controversial in boxing history. Midway through the first round, Liston threw a left jab and Ali went over it with a fast right, knocking the former champion down. Liston went down on his back. He rolled over, got to his right knee and then fell on his back again. Many in attendance did not see Ali deliver the punch. The fight quickly descended into chaos. Referee Jersey Joe Walcott, a former World Heavyweight Champion himself, had a hard time getting Ali to go to a neutral corner. Ali initially stood over his fallen opponent, gesturing and yelling at him, “Get up and fight, sucker!”

When Walcott got back to Liston and looked at the knockdown timekeeper, Francis McDonough, to pick up the count, Liston had fallen back on the canvas. Walcott never did pick up the count. He said he could not hear McDonough, who did not have a microphone. Also, McDonough did not bang on the canvas or motion a number count with his fingers. McDonough, however, claimed Walcott was looking at the crowd and never at him. After Liston arose, Walcott wiped off his gloves. He then

left the fighters to go over to McDonough. “The timekeeper was waving both hands and saying, ‘I counted him out—the fight is over,’” Walcott said after the fight. “Nat Fleischer [editor of *The Ring*] was sitting beside McDonough and he was waving his hands, too, saying it was over.” Walcott then rushed back to the fighters, who had resumed boxing, and stopped the fight—awarding Ali a first-round knockout victory.^[45] Strict interpretation of the knockdown/count rule states it is the referee’s count and not the timekeeper’s that is the official count. Furthermore, that count cannot be started until the fighter scoring the knockdown goes to and remains in a neutral corner. Ali did neither. Walcott never began a count in the ring because of Ali’s non-compliance and his physical struggle with getting Ali to go to that neutral corner. The interference of ringside reporters regarding interpretation of the rules, the fight stoppage and the controversy after the fight had not been seen since *The Long Count Fight* between Champion Gene Tunney and challenger Jack Dempsey in 1927.

The fight ranks as one of the shortest heavyweight title bouts in history. Many in the small crowd had not even settled in their seats when the fight was stopped. The official time of the stoppage was announced as 1:00 into the first round, which was wrong. Liston went down at 1:44, got up at 1:56, and Walcott stopped the fight at 2:12.

Numerous fans booed and started yelling, “Fix!” Many did not see the punch land and some of those who did see it land, didn’t think it was powerful enough to knock Liston out. Skeptics called the knockout blow “the phantom punch.” Ali called it “the anchor punch.” He said it was taught to him by comedian and film actor Stepin Fetchit, who learned it from Jack Johnson.

There were some, however, who believed the fight was legitimate. World Light Heavyweight Champion José Torres said, “It was a perfect punch.” Jim Murray of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote that it was “no phantom punch.” And Tex Maule of *Sports Illustrated* wrote, “The blow had so much force it lifted Liston’s left foot, upon which most of his weight was resting, well off the canvas.”

Some found it hard to believe that the punch could have floored a man like Liston. Hall of Fame announcer Don Dunphy said, “Here was a guy who was in prison and the guards used to beat him over the head with clubs and couldn’t knock him down.” But others contend that he wasn’t the same Liston. Dave Anderson of the *New York Times* said Liston “looked awful” in his last workout before the fight. Liston’s handlers secretly paid sparring partner Amos Lincoln an extra \$100 to take it easy on him. Arthur Daley of the *New York Times* wrote that Liston’s handlers knew he “didn’t have it anymore.”^[46]

Former champions Jack Dempsey, Joe Louis, Floyd Patterson and Gene Tunney, as well as contender George Chuvalo all stated that they considered the fight to be a fake. Some felt the knockdown was real but the knockout was fake. Ali biographer Wilfrid Sheed opines in

his book, *Muhammad Ali: A Portrait in Words and Photographs*, that Liston planned to throw the fight for reasons unknown and used the legitimate first round knock-down to do so. Sheed says that the punch and the knock-down “may have been genuine, but when referee Joe Walcott blew the count and gave him all evening to get up, Liston’s rendition of a coma wouldn’t have fooled a possum.”

While Liston publicly denied taking a dive, *Sports Illustrated* writer Mark Kram said that years later Liston told him, “That guy [Ali] was crazy. I didn’t want anything to do with him. And the Muslims were coming up. Who needed that? So I went down. I wasn’t hit.”^[47]

Subsequent fights

After the second loss to Ali, Liston stayed out of the ring for more than a year. He returned with four consecutive knockout victories in Sweden between July 1966 and April 1967, all four co-promoted by former World Heavyweight Champion Ingemar Johansson. One of the victories was over Amos Johnson, who had recently defeated British champion Henry Cooper.

Liston returned to the United States and won seven fights, all by knockout, in 1968. America’s first look at Liston since the Ali rematch was when he fought fifth-ranked Henry Clark in a nationally broadcast bout in July 1968. Liston won by a seventh-round technical knockout and seemed on the verge of making a comeback to the big time. He talked of a fight with Joe Frazier, claiming, “It’d be like shooting fish in a barrel.” Liston won fourteen consecutive bouts, thirteen by knockout, before fighting third-ranked Leotis Martin in December 1969. Liston decked Martin with a left hook in the fourth round and dominated most of the fight, but Martin came back and knocked Liston out cold in the ninth round. Unfortunately for Martin, his career ended after that fight because of a detached retina he suffered during the bout.

Liston won his final fight, a tough match against future world title challenger Chuck Wepner in June 1970.^[48] The bout was stopped after the ninth round due to cuts over both of Wepner’s eyes. Wepner needed 72 stitches and suffered a broken cheekbone and nose.

2.9.6 Personal life

Liston married Geraldine Chambers in St. Louis, Missouri, on June 10, 1950. Geraldine had a daughter from a previous relationship, and the Listons subsequently adopted a boy from Sweden. Liston biographer Paul Gallender claims that Liston fathered several children, though none with his wife. Geraldine remembered her husband as, “Great with me, great with the kids. He was a gentle man.”^[24]

2.9.7 Death

Following the win over Wepner, Liston was going to face Canadian champion George Chuvalo, but the fight never happened. “When I signed to fight him (in December 1970) he’d been dead for a week,” Chuvalo stated years later. “He passed away after I’d sent a telegram to the promoter, agreeing terms to the fight at the Montreal Forum. A day or so later a news report flashes up saying former heavyweight champion of the world Sonny Liston found dead at his Las Vegas home. I’d actually signed a contract to face a dead man.”^[49]

Liston was found dead by his wife, Geraldine, in their Las Vegas home on January 5, 1971.^[50] On returning home from a two-week trip, Geraldine had smelled a foul odor emanating from the main bedroom and on entering saw Sonny slumped up against the bed, a broken foot bench on the floor. Authorities theorized that he was undressing for bed when he fell over backward with such force that he broke the rail of the bench. Geraldine called Sonny’s attorney and his doctor but didn’t notify the police until two to three hours later.^[51]

Sergeant Dennis Caputo of the Clark County Sheriff’s Department was one of the first officers on the scene. Caputo found a quarter-ounce of heroin in a balloon in the kitchen and a half-ounce of marijuana in Liston’s pants pocket, but no syringes or needles. Some found it suspicious that authorities could not locate any drug paraphernalia that Liston presumably would have needed to inject the fatal dose, such as a spoon to cook the heroin or a tourniquet to wrap around his arm. However, former Las Vegas police sergeant Gary Beckwith said, “It wasn’t uncommon for family members in these cases to go through and tidy up...to save family embarrassment.”^[52]

Following an investigation, Las Vegas police concluded that there were no signs of foul play and declared Liston’s death a heroin overdose. “It was common knowledge that Sonny was a heroin addict,” said Caputo. “The whole department knew about it.” The date of death listed on his death certificate is December 30, 1970, which police estimated by judging the number of milk bottles and newspapers at the front door.

Coroner Mark Herman said traces of heroin byproducts were found in Liston’s system, but not in amounts large enough to have caused his death. Also, scar tissue, possibly from needle marks, was found in the bend of Liston’s left elbow. The toxicology report said his body was too decomposed for the tests to be conclusive. Officially, Liston died of lung congestion and heart failure.^[53] He had been suffering from hardening of the heart muscle and lung disease before his death.^[54] Liston had been hospitalized in early December, complaining of chest pains.^[55]

Many people who knew Liston insisted that he was afraid of needles and never would have used heroin. “He had a deadly fear of needles,” said Davey Pearl, a boxing referee and friend of Liston’s. “There was nothing

Sonny feared more than a needle. I know!" said Liston's Philadelphia dentist, Dr. Nick Ragni. "He was afraid of needles," echoed Father Edward Murphy. "He would do everything to avoid taking shots." According to Liston's trainer, Willie Reddish, Liston cancelled a planned tour to Africa in 1963 because he refused to get the required inoculations. Liston's wife also reported that her husband would refuse basic medical care for common colds because of his dislike of needles.^[56]

"The month before he died, some guy ran into Sonny while he was making a left turn. He had a whiplash, so they took him to the hospital," said boxing trainer Johnny Tocco. "He said: 'Look what they did!' and he was pointing at some little bandage over the needle mark in his arm. He was more angry about that shot than he was about the car wreck. A couple weeks later, he was still complainin' about that needle mark. To this day, I'm convinced that's what the coroner saw in his exam—that hospital needle mark."^[57]

Some claim Liston was murdered. There are several theories as to why: (1) Publicist Harold Conrad and others believed that Liston was deeply involved as a bill collector in a loan-sharking ring in Las Vegas. When he tried to muscle in for a bigger share of the action, Conrad surmised that his employers got him very drunk, took him home, and stuck him with a needle. (2) Professional gambler Lem Banker insists that Liston was murdered by drug dealers with whom he'd become involved. Banker said he was told by police that Liston had been seen at a house that would be the target of a drug raid. Banker said, "Sheriff [Ralph] Lamb told me, 'Tell your pal Sonny to stay away from the West Side because we're going to bust the drug dealers.'" Banker later learned that the police told Liston the same thing to his face. He apparently was at the dealers' house shortly before they got busted. Because of that, the dealers may have thought Sonny ratted on them and they shot him with a hot dose as retribution. (3) The mob promised Liston some money to throw the second Ali fight but they never paid him. As the years passed and Liston's financial situation worsened, he got angry and told the mob he'd go public with the story unless they gave him the money. That got him killed. (4) Liston was supposed to take a dive when he fought Chuck Wepner six months earlier, and killing him was payback for his failure to do so.^[55]

Some believe the police covered up what happened. On January 1, Liston's wife called Johnny Tocco and said she hadn't heard from her husband in three days and was worried. A few years before he died, Johnny Tocco allegedly told his good friend, Tony Davi, that he went to Liston's house and found the door locked and his car in the driveway. Tocco called the police, and they broke into the house. Tocco said that the living room furniture was in disarray but the house did not yet smell of death. He said they found Sonny lying on his bed with a needle sticking out of his arm. Johnny left the house before the police did. "Johnny wasn't a braggart," Davi told Liston biog-

rapher Paul Gallender. "He told me in the strictest confidence, but it was like he wanted to get it off his chest." Gallender claims, "A lot of officers knew Sonny was dead before Geraldine returned home on January 5, but they chose to let him rot."^[55]

Liston is interred in Paradise Memorial Gardens in Las Vegas, Nevada. His headstone bears two words: *A Man*. at *Find a Grave*

2.9.8 Professional boxing record

2.9.9 In popular culture

Acting

Liston played a fist fighter in the 1965 film *Harlow*, made a cameo appearance in the 1968 film *Head*, which starred The Monkees, and played the part of The Farmer in the 1970 film *Moonfire*, which starred Richard Egan and Charles Napier. Also in 1970, Liston appeared on an episode of the TV series *Love, American Style* and in a television commercial for Braniff Airlines with Andy Warhol.^{[7][59]}

Portrayal in film

In the 2001 film *Ali*, Liston was portrayed by former WBO Heavyweight Champion Michael Bentt.

Liston was the subject of a 2008 feature film based upon his life titled *Phantom Punch*. The film starred Ving Rhames as Liston and was produced by Rhames, Hassain Zaidi and Marek Posival.

In the 2015 British crime film *Legend*, Liston is played by Mark Theodore in a scene where gangster Reggie Kray poses for a picture with the boxer.

Portrayal in fiction

Liston appears as a character in James Ellroy's novel *The Cold Six Thousand*. In the novel, Liston not only drinks but also pops pills and works as a sometime enforcer for a heroin ring in Las Vegas. Liston also appears in the sequel, *Blood's a Rover*.

Thom Jones titled his 2000 collection of short stories *Sonny Liston Was a Friend of Mine*.^[60]

Music

Liston has been referenced in many songs by artists such as Curtis Eller, Sun Kil Moon, The Animals, Tom Petty, Mark Knopfler, Phil Ochs, Morrissey, Freddy Blohm, Chuck E. Weiss, This Bike is a Pipe Bomb, The Roots, Wu-Tang Clan, Gone Jackals, Billy Joel, The Mountain Goats, Lil Wayne, and Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds.

Mark Knopfler's tribute to Liston, "Song for Sonny Liston," appeared on his 2004 album *Shangri-La*.

"Sonny Liston" is also the name of an indie folk band from Oxford, England.^[61]

A wax model of Liston appears in the front row of the iconic sleeve cover of *The Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. He is seen in the far left part of the row, wearing a white and gold robe, standing beside the original-look Beatle figures.

Print

Liston appeared on the December 1963 cover of *Esquire* magazine (cover photograph by Carl Fischer) "the last man on earth America wanted to see coming down its chimney".^[62]

Elizabeth Bear wrote the short story "Sonny Liston Takes the Fall," published in *The Del Rey Book of Science Fiction and Fantasy* in 2008.^[63] The story speculates that Liston threw the Ali match for the social good.

2.9.10 See also

- List of WBA world champions
- List of WBC world champions
- List of The Ring world champions

2.9.11 References

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2.9.12 External links

- Professional boxing record for Sonny Liston from BoxRec
- The Cyber Boxing Zone—Sonny Liston
- *Red Arrow: The Mysterious Death of Sonny Liston* by Carlos Acevedo
- *The Sad Legacy of Sonny Liston* by William Dettloff
- *The Troubled Life And Sad Legacy Of Sonny Liston* by Mike Dunn
- Lyrics to a song about Liston by Mark Knopfler
- Sonny Liston Memorial at Find A Grave

2.10 Floyd Patterson

Floyd Patterson (January 4, 1935 – May 11, 2006) was an American professional boxer who held the undisputed world heavyweight championship. At the age of 21, he became the youngest boxer to win the world heavyweight title, and was also the first heavyweight to regain the title after losing it. As an amateur he won a gold medal at the 1952 Olympics in the middleweight division.

Although Mike Tyson later became the youngest boxer to win a world heavyweight title at the age of 20, Patterson remains the youngest undisputed heavyweight champion. He was trained by Cus D'Amato.

2.10.1 Early life

Born into a poor family in **Waco, North Carolina**, Patterson was the youngest of eleven children and experienced an insular and troubled childhood. His family moved to **Brooklyn, New York**, where Floyd was a truant and petty thief. At age ten, he was sent to the Wiltwyck School for Boys, a reform school in upstate **New York**, which he credited with turning his life around. He stayed there for almost 2 years. He attended high school in New Paltz, NY where he succeeded in all sports (to this day the New Paltz football field is named in his honor). At age fourteen, he started to box, trained by **Cus D'Amato** at his Gramercy Gym. Aged just 17, Patterson won the Gold medal in the 1952 **Helsinki Olympics** as a **middleweight**. 1952 turned out to be a good year for the young Patterson; in addition to Olympic gold Patterson won the **National Amateur Middleweight Championship** and **New York Golden Gloves Middleweight Championship**.

Olympic results

- Defeated Omar Tebakka (France) 3-0
- Defeated Leonardus Jansen (Netherlands) TKO 1
- Defeated Stig Sjölin (Sweden) DQ 3
- Defeated Vasile Tiță (Romania) KO 1

Patterson's amateur record over 44 fights was 40-4, with 37 knockouts.

Patterson carried his hands higher than most boxers, in front of his face. Sportswriters called Patterson's style a "peek-a-boo" stance.

2.10.2 Early pro career

Patterson turned pro and steadily rose through the ranks, his only early defeat being an eight-round decision to former **Light Heavyweight Champion** **Joey Maxim** on June 7, 1954, at the Eastern Parkway Arena in Brooklyn, New York. Most people think Patterson did enough to win, and Maxim's greater fame at the time helped to sway the judges.

2.10.3 Championship

Although Patterson fought around the light heavyweight limit for much of his early career, he and manager Cus D'Amato always had plans to fight for the **Heavyweight Championship**. In fact, D'Amato made these plans clear as early as 1954, when he told the press that Patterson was aiming for the heavyweight title.^[1] However, after **Rocky Marciano** announced his retirement as **World Heavyweight Champion** on April 27, 1956, Patterson was ranked by *The Ring* magazine as the top light heavyweight

contender. After Marciano's announcement, Jim Norris of the **International Boxing Club** stated that Patterson was one of the six fighters who would take part in an elimination tournament to crown Marciano's successor. *The Ring* then moved Patterson into the heavyweight rankings, at number five.^[2]

Patterson vs. Moore

After beating **Tommy "Hurricane" Jackson** in an elimination fight, Patterson faced former **Light Heavyweight Champion** **Archie Moore** on November 30, 1956, for the **World Heavyweight Championship**. He beat Moore by a **knockout** in five rounds and became the youngest **World Heavyweight Champion** in history, at the age of 21 years, 10 months, 3 weeks and 5 days. He was the first Olympic gold medalist to win a professional Heavyweight title.



Ingemar Johansson knocks out Floyd Patterson and becomes boxing heavyweight champion of the world, June 26, 1959.

Patterson vs. Johansson I, II & III

After a series of defenses against fringe contenders (**Hurricane Jackson**, **Pete Rademacher**, **Roy Harris**, and **Brian London**), Patterson met **Ingemar Johansson** of **Sweden**, the number one contender, in the first of three fights. Johansson triumphed over Patterson on June 26, 1959, with the referee **Ruby Goldstein** stopping the fight in the third round after the Swede had knocked Patterson down seven times. Johansson became Sweden's first **World Heavyweight Champion**, thus becoming a national hero as the first European to defeat an American for the title since 1933.

Patterson knocked out Johansson in the fifth round of their rematch on June 20, 1960, to become the first man in history to regain the **Undisputed World Heavyweight Championship**. Johansson hit the canvas hard, seemingly out before he landed flat on his back. With glazed eyes, blood trickling from his mouth and his left foot quivering,

he was counted out. Johansson lay unconscious for five minutes before he was helped onto a stool.

A third fight between them was held on March 13, 1961 and while Johansson put Patterson on the floor, Patterson retained his title by knockout in the sixth round to win the rubber match in which Patterson was decked twice and Johansson once in the first round. Johansson had landed both right hands over Floyd's left jab. After getting up from the second knockdown Floyd abandoned his jab and connected with a left hook that knocked down Johansson. After that, Patterson came on with a strong body attack that wore down Johansson. In the 6th round, Johansson caught Patterson with a solid right. But the power in Ingemar's punches was gone. Patterson won the fight in the 6th round by knockout.^[3]

Patterson vs. Liston I & II

After the third Johansson fight, Patterson defended the title on December 4, 1961 against Tom McNeeley and retained the title with a fourth-round knockout. However he did not fight number one contender **Sonny Liston**. This was due in part to Cus D'Amato, who did not want Patterson in the ring with a boxer with mob connections. As a result, D'Amato turned down any challenges involving the IBC. Eventually, due to a monetary dispute with **Jimmy Jacobs**, Patterson removed D'Amato from handling his business affairs and agreed to fight Liston.

Leading up to the fight, Sonny Liston was the major betting line favorite, though *Sports Illustrated* predicted that Patterson would win in 15 rounds. **Jim Braddock**, **Jersey Joe Walcott**, **Ezzard Charles**, **Rocky Marciano** and **Ingemar Johansson** picked Patterson to win. The fight also carried a number of social implications. Liston's connections with the mob were well known and the NAACP was concerned about having to deal with Liston's visibility as World Champion and had encouraged Patterson not to fight Liston, fearing that a Liston victory would tarnish the civil rights movement.^[4] Patterson also claimed that **John F. Kennedy** did not want him to fight Liston either.^[5]

Patterson lost his title to Liston on September 25, 1962 in Chicago, by a first-round knockout in front of 18,894 fans. The two fighters were a marked contrast. In the ring, Liston's size and power proved too much for Patterson's guile and agility. However, Patterson did not use his speed to his benefit. According to *Sports Illustrated* writer **Gilbert Rogin**, Patterson didn't punch enough and frequently tried to clinch with Liston. Liston battered Patterson with body shots and then shortened up and connected with two double hooks high on the head. The result at the time was the third-fastest knockout in boxing history.^[6] After being knocked out, Patterson left **Comiskey Park** in Chicago wearing dark glasses and a fake beard for the drive back to New York. After the fight, questions were raised on whether the fight was fixed to set up a more lu-

crative rematch. Overnight, Patterson seemed to lose his public support as a result of his swift knockout.^[7]

The rematch was set for April 1963; however, Liston injured his knee swinging a golf club and the fight was delayed to July 22, 1963. In Las Vegas that night, Patterson attempted to become the first boxer to win the Heavyweight title three times, but Liston once again knocked him out in the first round. Patterson lasted four seconds longer than in the first bout.

Post-title career

Following these defeats, Patterson went through a depression. However, he eventually recovered and began winning fights again, including top victories over **Eddie Machen** and **George Chuvalo**. The Chuvalo match getting *Ring* magazine's "Fight of the Year" award.

Patterson was now the number one challenger for the title held by **Muhammad Ali**. On November 22, 1965, in yet another attempt to be the first to win the World Heavyweight title three times, Patterson lost by technical knockout at the end of the 12th round, going into the fight with an injured sacro-iliac joint in a bout in which Ali was clearly dominant.^[8] Ali called Patterson an "Uncle Tom" for refusing to call him **Muhammad Ali** (Patterson continued to call him **Cassius Clay**) and for this outspokenness against black Muslims.^[9] Instead of scoring a quick knockout, Ali mocked, humiliated and punished Patterson throughout the fight before knocking him out in the 12th round.^[10]

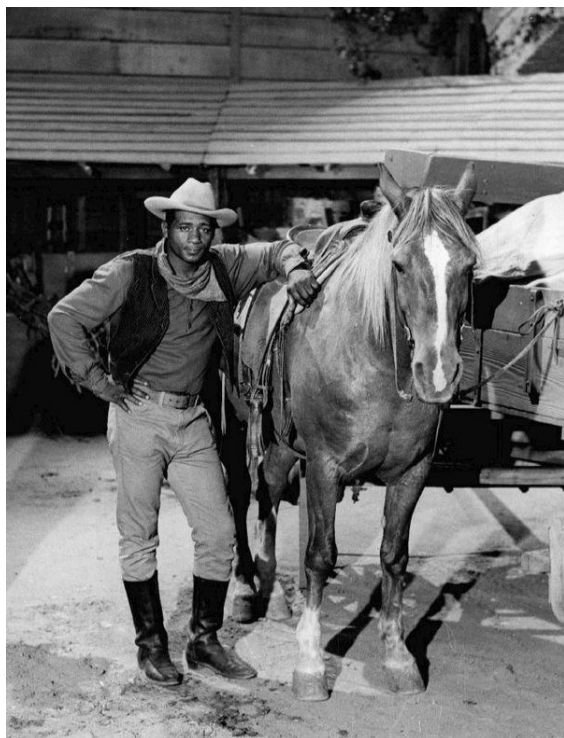
Patterson was still a legitimate contender. In 1966 he traveled to England and knocked out British boxer **Henry Cooper** in just four rounds at Wembley Stadium.

In September 1969 he divorced his first wife, **Sandra Hicks Patterson**, who wanted him to quit boxing, while he still had hopes for another title shot.

When Ali was stripped of his title for refusing induction into the military, the **World Boxing Association** staged an eight-man tournament to determine his successor. Patterson fought **Jerry Quarry** to a draw in 1967. In a rematch four months later, Patterson lost a controversial 12-round decision to Quarry. Subsequently, in a third and final attempt at winning the title a third time, Patterson lost a controversial 15-round referee's decision to **Jimmy Ellis** in Sweden, despite breaking Ellis's nose and scoring a disputed knockdown.

Patterson continued on, defeating **Oscar Bonavena** in a close fight over ten rounds in early 1972.

At age 37, Patterson was stopped in the seventh round in a rematch with **Muhammad Ali** for the NABF Heavyweight title on September 20, 1972. The defeat proved to be Patterson's last fight, although there was never an announcement of retirement.



Patterson tried his hand at acting. He is seen in this 1968 *The Wild Wild West* episode as a landowner who is in danger of losing his property.

2.10.4 Retired life

In retirement, he and Johansson became good friends who flew across the Atlantic to visit each other every year and he became chairman of the New York State Athletic Commission. He was also inducted into the International Boxing Hall Of Fame in 1991.^[11]

In 1982 and 1983 he ran the Stockholm Marathon together with Ingemar Johansson.

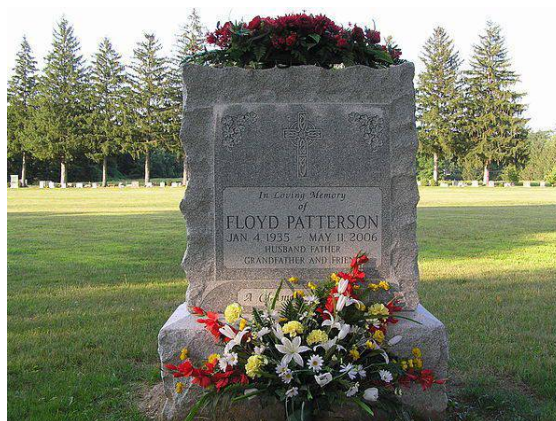
Patterson lived in New Paltz, New York for many years and was known as a true gentleman around town.

His adopted son, Tracy Harris Patterson, was a world champion boxer in the 1990s and was trained by Floyd during part of his career. Floyd also trained Canadian heavyweight Donovan “Razor” Ruddock in 1992 for his fights with Greg Page, Phil Jackson, and Lennox Lewis.^[12]

The New Paltz High School football field was named “Floyd Patterson Field” in 1985.

2.10.5 Death

Floyd Patterson suffered from Alzheimer’s disease and prostate cancer and had been hospitalized for a week prior to his death. He died at home in New Paltz in 2006 at age 71. He is buried at New Paltz Rural Cemetery in New Paltz, Ulster County, New York.^[13]



The grave of Floyd Patterson

2.10.6 Quotes

- “It’s easy to do anything in victory. It’s in defeat that a man reveals himself.”
- “They said I was the fighter who got knocked down the most, but I also got up the most.” (This quote was used in the tenth episode of the 2009 TV series *V.*)
- “When you have millions of dollars, you have millions of friends.”^[14]
- On boxing: “It’s like being in love with a woman. She can be unfaithful, she can be mean, she can be cruel, but it doesn’t matter. If you love her, you want her, even though she can do you all kinds of harm. It’s the same with me and boxing. It can do me all kinds of harm but I love it.”

2.10.7 Professional boxing record

2.10.8 References

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- [6] Sonny Liston: The Facts <http://www.thesweetscience.com/boxing-article/705/sonny-liston-facts/>

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- [12] <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1003844/index.htm> Floyd Patterson: His Own Man
- [13] Alan Howard Levy. *Floyd Patterson: A Boxer and a Gentleman*, p. 263
- [14] <http://jco.usfca.edu/boxing/rape.html>
- [15] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=009038&cat=boxer

2.10.9 Further reading

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- Mulvaney, Kieran, Patterson an all-time great outside the ropes. *ESPN.com*, May 12, 2006.
- *Victory Over Myself* by Floyd Patterson with Milton Gross. Published by Bernard Geis Associates, distributed by Random House, 1962. Library of Congress Catalog Number: 62-15657.

2.10.10 Further watching

- Ingemar Johansson versus Floyd Patterson. 1wn0Yc1bKR0

2.10.11 External links

- Professional boxing record for Floyd Patterson from BoxRec
- Sports E-Cyclopedia's Memoriam to Floyd Patterson
- Floyd Patterson - Daily Telegraph obituary
- Floyd Patterson at *Find a Grave*
- SPORT magazine, November 1960
- svenska.yle.fi/arkivet: Interview with Floyd Patterson and Ingemar Johansson
- The Official Site of Floyd Patterson

2.11 George Chuvalo

George Chuvalo, CM (born September 12, 1937) is a retired Canadian professional boxer who was a five-time Canadian heavyweight champion, and two-time world heavyweight title challenger. Chuvalo, who is considered by many to have one of, if not the best chin in boxing history, was never knocked down in his amateur career, in his professional career, or in sparring, and was ranked #4 on ESPN's greatest chin in boxing history list. Chuvalo; a big, rugged, bull necked fighter, was known for his physicality, pummeling style, punching power and his brutal body attack, though early in his career he also displayed a crisp left jab. The late Nat Fleischer described him in a 1965 article – "...Chuvalo is a crude, strong, powerful, flat-footed pugilist who knows only one way to fight – the old bare-knuckle style in which roughness and body pummeling were featured. Scientific boxing is not part of Chuvalo's equipment.....". Rocky Marciano was quoted saying that Chuvalo was born a hundred years too late. Few contemporary analysts credited his savvy ring skills even those so-called experts from his own country. He fought in the golden era of heavyweight boxing during the 1960s and 70s. Chuvalo lost to Hall of Fame heavyweights such as Floyd Patterson, Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier and George Foreman, but was credited for his spirited performances. He did defeat top contenders such as Yvon Durelle, Doug Jones, Jerry Quarry and Cleveland Williams. He fought for the world title twice, losing a controversial decision to Ernie Terrell and another decision in his first fight with Ali.

George Chuvalo was inducted into the Ontario Sports Hall of Fame in 1995.^[1]

2.11.1 Early life and career

Born in Toronto to Croat parents from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Stipan and Katica (*née* Kordić) Čuvalo, both from villages near Ljubuški. His father was from Proboj and mother from Grljevići. Chuvalo grew up in The Junction district of west Toronto. He attended St. Michael's College School and HumberSide Collegiate Institute, becoming one of the best-known amateur boxers in Toronto, fighting out of the EarlsCourt Athletic Club.

Chuvalo became Canadian amateur heavyweight champion in May 1955, defeating Winnipeg's Peter Piper with a first-round KO in a tournament final in Regina, Saskatchewan. Chuvalo finished his amateur career with a 16-0-0 record, all by KO within four rounds. Nicknamed "Boom Boom", Chuvalo turned professional in 1956, knocking out four opponents in one night to win a heavyweight tournament held by former world's champion Jack Dempsey at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto on April 26, 1956.^[2] Rocky Marciano was one of his trainers in his early career.

2.11.2 Versus Patterson

Chuvalo lost a close decision to former champion and sentimental favourite **Floyd Patterson** in a bout at New York's famed Madison Square Garden that *The Ring* named *fight of the year* for 1965. Patterson described it as one of the toughest contests of his career.

2.11.3 Two Ali fights

Chuvalo is best known for his two fights against **Muhammad Ali**. He went the distance both times, in each case losing the decision by a wide margin on the scorecards. The first fight, on March 29, 1966, was for Ali's world title. "He's the toughest guy I ever fought", said Ali of Chuvalo after the fight.^[3] Ali's cornerman, **Angelo Dundee**, said, "He never stopped coming on ... you've got to admire a man like that." Various articles over the years detail that Ali had painful ribs for weeks after the contest. The second Ali fight was in 1972. Ali—then between his world championship reigns—won an easy decision. It was the last major fight of Chuvalo's career.

2.11.4 Other career highlights

Future world champions **Joe Frazier** and **George Foreman**, despite being big punchers, were unable to knock Chuvalo down, but they were the only two fighters to ever stop him, scoring *technical knockout* (TKO) victories. *Ring Mag* reported Frazier nearly closed both Chuvalo's eyes and also cracked one of the man's cheek bones.

Foreman, regarded as one of the hardest hitters in boxing history, mauled Chuvalo with a wicked jab and some truly thunderous big punches breaking Chuvalo's nose. Yet, in his typical display of toughness, when the referee stopped the fight in the third round, Chuvalo said to him, "What are you, nuts?".

One of Chuvalo's biggest victories was a seventh-round knockout of contender **Jerry Quarry** on December 12, 1969. Afterwards Quarry complained of a fast count but Chuvalo responded 'It must have been a good punch'.

He lost to **WBA** heavyweight champion **Ernie Terrell** in 1965 and to former **WBA** champion **Jimmy Ellis** in 1971, with both of those fights taking place at Maple Leaf Gardens.

He got an eleventh-round knockout against contender **Doug Jones** on October 2, 1964 notably using the boxing technique 'kill the body and the head dies'. Chuvalo also defeated notable fighters such as **Howard King**, Canadian champion **Bob Cleroux**, **Yvon Durelle**, **Willi Besmanoff**, big hitting **Mike DeJohn**, **Cleveland Williams**, and **Manuel Ramos**.

Chuvalo was the number one contender for the British Empire heavyweight title for many years but champion **Henry Cooper** would not fight him.

2.11.5 Personal life

Chuvalo had five children in total; he lost three of his sons, **Jesse Chuvalo** in 1985 to suicide, **Georgie Lee Chuvalo** in 1993 and **Steven Louis Chuvalo** in 1996 both to drug overdoses, he also has a son **Mitchell Aaron Dion** and a daughter **Vanessa Lynn** from his marriage. He lost his wife to suicide shortly after the second son had died. He also has two step-children from his second marriage.

2.11.6 Tributes and other appearances

Chuvalo was inducted into the **Canadian Sports Hall of Fame** in 1990 and the **World Boxing Hall of Fame** in 1997. He was made a Member of the **Order of Canada** in 1998 and was awarded a star on **Canada's Walk of Fame** in 2005.

Former **Ottawa Senators** goalie **Ray Emery** has a picture of Chuvalo painted on his goalie mask.

Chuvalo also appeared in film roles. These included playing an ex-boxer turned hitman (who claims to have fought **Muhammad Ali**!) in the murder thriller *I Miss You, Hugs and Kisses* (1978), and the ill-fated arm-wrestler in the 1986 re-make of *The Fly*.

On August 14, 2008, Chuvalo's kitchen was the featured renovation project on the Canadian TV series *Holmes on Homes* in an episode titled "Kitchen Knockout."^[4]

Chuvalo was featured as part of the 2009 documentary film *Facing Ali*, in which notable former opponents of Ali (Chuvalo fought Ali twice) speak about how fighting Ali changed their lives.

During April 2010, George was a special guest at the **BC Golden Gloves** tournament held at the **Eagle Ridge Community Centre** in **Langford, BC**.^[5] The event was co-hosted by **Boxing BC** and the **Capital City Boxing Club**

On December 17, 2011, he came to **Sarajevo** to attend the unveiling of a statue in his honor in **Ljubuški** on Sunday, December 18, 2011.^[6]

Chuvalo appears on the cover for Canadian rock band **Our Lady Peace's** 2012 album *Curve*. Chuvalo's vocal excerpts are featured in "Mettle", the final song in the album.

2.11.7 Professional boxing record

2.11.8 References

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- [3] “Great catcher poor pitcher that’s George”, Jim Proudfoot, *Toronto Star*, March 30, 1966
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- [7] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=119&cat=boxer&pageID=1

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2.11.9 External links

- Džordž (Jure) Čuvalo, najbolji kanadski bokser svih vremena: Nikad na kolenima - Tačno.net
- George Chuvalo’s Official Fight Against Drugs Website
- Professional boxing record for George Chuvalo from BoxRec
- CBC Digital Archives - Still Standing: The People’s Champion George Chuvalo
- Historica.ca - Footprints - George Chuvalo
- Ian Palmer’s TigerBoxing article on Chuvalo
- The Canadian Encyclopedia
- Cyber Boxing Zone Encyclopedia
- CBC Digital Archives. The Biggest Fight of George Chuvalo’s Life
- George Chuvalo at the Internet Movie Database

2.12 Brian London

Brian London, (born **Brian Sidney Harper**, 19 June 1934, in West Hartlepool, County Durham) is a retired English heavyweight boxer.^[1] He was British and Commonwealth Heavyweight champion from 1958 to 1959, and twice challenged for the world heavyweight title, losing to Floyd Patterson in 1959 and Muhammad Ali in 1966. He was one of a quartet of British boxers, with Henry Cooper, Joe Erskine and Dick Richardson, who dominated the British boxing scene throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

An orthodox, rugged, no-nonsense fighter who lacked finesse but showed lots of courage, he was 6 ft tall and

fought at about 205 lbs. His nicknames in the ring were “The British Bulldog” and “The Blackpool Rock”. He defeated a number of world-class and well-known fighters such as Zora Folley, Willie Pastrano, Pete Rademacher, Tom McNeeley, Roger Rischer, Joe Erskine, Amos Johnson, Billy Walker, Von Clay, Young Jack Johnson and Kitone Lave.

2.12.1 Early career

London was born in West Hartlepool, County Durham, in 1934, and moved to Blackpool when he was 16 years old, where he has lived ever since.^[2] His father, Jack London, beat Freddie Mills in 1944 to win the British heavyweight title. He also had a brother, Jack junior, who fought as a light-heavyweight. London fought as an amateur before turning professional in 1955.^[3] He made a good start to his career, winning his first twelve bouts, until he came up against Henry Cooper in May 1956. Cooper stopped him with a technical knockout in the first round.^[3] Following this defeat, London continued his winning run, apart from two ten-round point defeats, against Heinz Neuhaus in Dortmund, in 1957 and against the talented American, Willie Pastrano in February 1958.^[3]

2.12.2 British heavyweight title

In June 1958, he fought Joe Erskine, the Welsh boxer, for the British and Commonwealth heavyweight titles. The fight was at the White City Stadium, London, and London took the titles with an eighth-round knockout. He followed this in September with a revenge win against Willie Pastrano, by a technical knockout in the fifth round. On 12 January 1959, London lost his titles in a fight against Henry Cooper, losing for the second time to the Londoner by a points decision after fifteen rounds.^{[3][4]}

2.12.3 World title fight

In May 1959 he was given the chance of a world title fight against current champion Floyd Patterson, but he lost the bout in Indianapolis by a knockout in the eleventh. He also lost to the Cuban Nino Valdez later that year, by a technical knockout in the seventh. However, in January 1960, London bounced back when he beat the American Pete Rademacher by a knockout in the seventh.^[3] Rademacher had made history by being the only man to fight for the world heavyweight championship on his professional debut, losing to Floyd Patterson.

2.12.4 Further domestic career

In August 1960, London challenged Dick Richardson for his European heavyweight title, but lost the bout in Porthcawl, Wales on a technical knockout in the eighth.

This result provoked a brawl, when London's father and brother invaded the ring to protest that Richardson had used his head to open a cut on his opponent. When Richardson's trainer shouted a few remarks at London, London replied with an impressive combination of blows, decking him, and chaos broke out. As a result of the incident, London was fined by the **British Boxing Board of Control**.

In October 1961, London lost to the American, **Eddie Machen** by a technical knockout in the tenth, and in April 1963, he lost to the **Swede, Ingemar Johansson** on points over twelve rounds.

He fought Henry Cooper for the third time in February 1964, when he challenged for his British and Commonwealth titles, as well as the vacant European title. The fight took place in Manchester, and Cooper won on points after fifteen rounds.^[3]

His next fight of note was in March 1965, against the young "Golden Boy" of British boxing, **Billy Walker**. London won on points after ten rounds.

2.12.5 Second world title fight

In August 1966, London fought for the world heavyweight title for the second time, when **Muhammad Ali** came to defend his title at Earl's Court Exhibition Hall. Ali put in a masterful performance hitting London at will - as London put it in an interview with BBC TV "he was just getting through all the time" - Brian was KO'd in the 3rd round after Ali landed 11 punches in 3 seconds.

2.12.6 Latter stages of his career

In March 1967, London next fought American, **Jerry Quarry**, in Los Angeles, losing the fight by a unanimous decision after ten rounds. In November 1967, London had what was to be the last win in his career when he fought the talented American **Zora Folley**. Folley had lost a world title fight against Muhammad Ali earlier that year, and London beat him on points over ten rounds.^[3]

London had continued to fight when he was past his best, and in June 1968, he lost, by a technical knockout to **Jack Bodell**. In September 1969 he travelled to Oakland, California to fight **Jerry Quarry** for the second time, this time being knocked out in the second round.^[3] The bout was unusual in that the bell was inadvertently rung as London was getting up after being knocked down in the second. The fighters returned to their corners and the referee, realising that the round had not finished, made them resume. London was then knocked down again and was counted out before the end of the round.

London's last fight was against the up-and-coming young boxer **Joe Bugner**, who would eventually take the British, Commonwealth and European titles from Henry Cooper. The bout was in May 1970, at Wembley, and Bugner won

by a technical knockout in the fifth, signalling an end to London's career.^[3]

2.12.7 Retirement and personal life

After retiring from boxing, London became a businessman in his hometown of Blackpool, owning several nightclubs, and is still a fitness fanatic running 12 miles a day. **Teetotal** all of his life, in 2006 it was revealed that he was still only a few pounds over his fighting weight.^[2] He is married with three children.

In January 1971 English footballer **Bobby Moore** was embroiled in what became a national media story when he and three other **West Ham United** players, **Jimmy Greaves**, **Clyde Best** and **Brian Dear**, spent the evening at London's 007 nightclub in Blackpool, the night before an important **FA Cup** match against **Blackpool** which they went on to lose 4-0, with then West Ham manager **Ron Greenwood** and the national media severely criticising the players. Moore later said of the incident, "I'd met Brian London on many occasions and thought it would be nice to look him up. I suppose we all realised at the time that we were leaving ourselves vulnerable".^{[5][6]}

London has always said that fighting **Muhammad Ali** was the greatest honour of his life. Like so many other boxers, London continued fighting long after his prime. He was 22 wins to 3 losses early in his career but lost 17 of his last 33 fights. In judging London's career it should be remembered that he fought some of the best fighters in the world, including four who at some stage were world champions - Ali, Patterson, Johansson and Pastrano.

My dad was Jack London and I was expected to fight as well. I was never a great fighter. I was just really, really fit.^[2]

— Brian London

In 2004, the **British Boxing** website listed London at number eight in a list of the top ten post World War II **British Heavyweight** boxers.^[7] He is a member of *Blackpool Sportsman's Aid Society* (BSAS) which raises funds for local charities and sporting needs in Blackpool.

2.12.8 Professional boxing record

2.12.9 See also

- **List of British heavyweight boxing champions**

2.12.10 References

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2.12.12 External links

- Professional boxing record for Brian London from [BoxRec](#)

2.13 Karl Mildenberger

Karl Mildenberger (born 23 November 1937, in Kaiserslautern) is a retired German heavyweight boxer. He was the European Heavyweight Champion from 1964 to 1968 (retained the Title 6 times). Mildenberger fought Muhammad Ali for the World Heavyweight Title in September 1966. Mildenberger, a left-hander, frustrated the champ for most of the fight, but ultimately lost by TKO when the referee stopped the fight at 1:28 of the twelfth round following a flurry of punches by Ali.

Karl Mildenberger lost his first fight for the European Heavyweight title when he was knocked out by Dick Richardson, the Welsh boxer, in one round in April 1962. Karl rebounded with wins over Joe Erskine, Archie McBride, Joe Bygraves and a knockout win over Billy Daniels.

Mildenberger then got a draw with highly ranked Zora Folley in April 1964. Later that year Mildenberger scored a first round knockout over Sante Amonte to capture the European Heavyweight title.

He defeated Eddie Machen over ten rounds in 1966. In April 1966 Mildenberger had a five round exhibition in Sweden with former world champion Ingemar Johansson.

In 1967, Mildenberger participated in a tournament staged by the World Boxing Association to determine the new heavyweight champion after Ali was stripped of the title for refusing induction into the draft. In the first round of the tournament, getting off the deck, he lost to Oscar Bonavena by a clear twelve round decision in what was proclaimed the *Ring Magazine* upset of the year.

Mildenberger was not the same afterwards, and was knocked out by contender Leotis Martin in seven rounds (April 1968). Subsequently, in September 1968, Mildenberger’s career ended when he lost the European Heavyweight title to Henry Cooper by eight round disqualification.

Mildenberger was the first southpaw to fight for the World Heavyweight Title.

2.13.1 Professional boxing record

2.13.2 References

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2.13.3 External links

- Professional boxing record for Karl Mildenberger from [BoxRec](#)

2.14 Cleveland Williams

Cleveland “Big Cat” Williams (June 6, 1933 – September 3, 1999) was an American heavyweight boxer who fought in the 1950s through the 1970s. A *Ring Magazine* poll once rated him as one of the finest boxers never to win a title. He made an imposing figure, tall with an impressive athletic broad shouldered build.

Williams turned professional in 1951 and fought many of the best heavyweights of his era. He is best known for the two brutal bouts he had with Sonny Liston. Critics felt the second match was overrated and quickly over. Liston often said Williams was the hardest puncher he ever fought.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the 6 ft 3 in^[1] Williams was a top-rated heavyweight. His quest to obtain a title fight, however, was consistently derailed. First he was knocked out by Liston on April 15, 1959, after hurting Liston early and breaking Liston’s nose.

Williams recovered from the Liston fight to score more wins, but was again stopped by Liston in 2 rounds in their rematch on March 21, 1960. His quest for the title was later stalled when he was held to a draw by Eddie Machen on July 10, 1962, and when he dropped a split decision on March 13, 1963 to Ernie Terrell, a fighter he had previously knocked out in 7 rounds in 1962. During this time

frame, he defeated Billy Daniels.

Williams had been inactive the entire year of 1965 while recovering from a gunshot wound he suffered during a scuffle with police officer Dale Witten after a traffic stop. Williams was shot with a .357 Magnum in the abdomen, barely survived, and suffered permanent kidney damage, a loss of over ten feet (3m) of his small intestine, and nerve damage from the bullet, which affected his left leg above the knee and caused it to atrophy as a result. He was fined \$50 and briefly jailed after pleading no contest to charges arising from the incident. Witten visited Williams the day before his fight with Muhammed Ali, and the two men bore no malice against each other.^[2]

2.14.1 Versus Ali

It was in the above greatly diminished physical condition that Williams fought for the heavyweight championship against a peak Muhammad Ali on November 14, 1966 and was stopped easily in the third round.

Williams retired from boxing after the Ali bout, but later made a comeback. Although able to defeat journeymen fighters, he suffered several knockout losses before retiring for good in 1972. Williams finished his career with a record of 78 wins (58 KOs), 13 losses and 1 draw. George Foreman interviewed post retirement recalled Williams as one of the three hardest punchers he'd been with, stating they'd sparred when George was a rising boxer.^[3] In 2003, he was ranked 49th in *Ring Magazine's* list of 100 greatest punchers of all time. It was all in the big famous left hook for Williams. *Ring Magazine* in the 1980s reported he drove a forklift truck later for a while as a job.

According to George Foreman, Cleveland Williams was one of the three hardest punchers he have faced in his career along with Ron Lyle and Gerry Cooney.^[4]

In 1999, Cleveland Williams was killed in a hit and run accident.

2.14.2 Professional boxing record

2.14.3 References

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[2] http://boxrec.com/media/index.php/Cleveland_Williams

[3] net Foreman interview watched Nov 2013

[4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JmG_gR576EA

[5] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=9382&cat=boxer

- ALI's DOZEN, ESPN Home Entertainment/Genius Entertainment, 2007.

2.14.4 External links

- Professional boxing record for Cleveland Williams from BoxRec

2.15 Ernie Terrell

Ernie Terrell (April 4, 1939 – December 16, 2014) was an American singer, record producer, and World Boxing Association (WBA) heavyweight boxing champion. At 6 ft 6 in (1.98 m), he was very tall, by the standards of the day. By comparison, Muhammad Ali was 6 ft 3 in, and Joe Frazier was 5 ft 11 in. Terrell was the older brother of *The Supremes'* early 1970s lead singer Jean Terrell. In the 1960s, she sang with his group, “Ernie Terrell & the Heavyweights”.^[1]

In his early boxing career, Terrell defeated some good contenders, including Cleveland Williams (Terrell won the rematch by decision after losing to Williams in their first fight by knockout), Zora Folley, and future Light Heavyweight champion Bob Foster. But he's best remembered for his challenge to World Heavyweight Champion Muhammad Ali, on February 6, 1967—a bout in which he was badly beaten.

Ali was scheduled to fight WBA champion Ernie Terrell (the WBA stripped Ali of his title after his agreement to fight a rematch with Liston) on March 29, but Terrell backed out and Ali won a 15-round decision against substitute opponent George Chuvalo. World Boxing Association matched Terrell and Eddie Machen for the vacant crown. Terrell defeated Machen to win the belt on March 5, 1965. He held it until February 6, 1967 when he lost to Muhammad Ali. During this time, most in the boxing world continued to recognize Ali as the legitimate champion, since he had not lost his championship in a boxing match. The WBA's rival, the World Boxing Council, had also continued to recognize Ali as champion.

During his reign as WBA Champion, Terrell defended the title twice, beating Doug Jones and George Chuvalo.

In February 1967, Ali and Terrell met to end the debate about who was the legitimate heavyweight champion. Before the bout, Terrell repeatedly called Ali by his birth name. He explained later that he had known Clay for years in the amateurs and hadn't gotten used to calling him another name. Ali took offense to this, and vowed he would punish Terrell. For his part, Ali further stoked the prefight ill will by labeling Terrell “an Uncle Tom nigger who is going to get his ass whupped.”^[2]

Ali won a lopsided 15 round decision, reclaiming the undisputed championship. The Daily Telegraph wrote that the resulting fight was “the nastiest display of Ali's celebrated ring career,” recounting how he seized Terrell in a headlock and dragged Terrell's eye along the top rope, and declared, “The fight will be remembered for Ali's constant taunts of 'what's my name?' to an oppo-

nent he was apparently content not merely to defeat, but also to belittle and humiliate.”^[3] The fight is recounted by the film *Ali* starring Will Smith.

Terrell lost an upset 12 round decision later in 1967 in the WBA Heavyweight Tournament which was organized after Ali was stripped of his title in April 1967. He left the sport for three years following the loss, but returned in 1970, winning seven consecutive fights before losing to Chuck Wepner by decision.

In 55 professional fights, Terrell earned a record of 46 wins (21 by knockout), nine losses and no draws. After retiring from boxing in 1973 following a knockout loss to Jeff Merritt, he began a career as a music producer in Chicago, Illinois, the city where he'd attended Farragut Career Academy.

Ernie Terrell ran unsuccessfully for alderman of Chicago's 34th ward in 1987. He finished second in the primary but lost to Lemuel Austin in a runoff. Terrell died on December 16, 2014 in a hospital at Evergreen Park, Illinois. He had been suffering from dementia.^[4]

2.15.1 Professional boxing record

2.15.2 References

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2.15.3 External links

- Professional boxing record for Ernie Terrell from BoxRec

2.16 Zora Folley

Zora Folley (May 27, 1932 – July 9, 1972) was an American heavyweight boxer. He was well skilled with a good defence and also a punch to go with it.

Born in Dallas, Texas, he moved with his family to Chandler, Arizona in 1942, where he grew up playing

baseball. Upon joining the U.S. Army in 1948, he entered the boxing ring, and won the 6th Army championship within a year, eventually earning the All-Army and All-Service titles. He fought in the Korean War, earning five battle stars, and was discharged in 1953.

He then signed a professional boxing contract, winning his first pro fight against Jimmy Ingram, then after a draw, won seventeen straight victories until losing to Johnny Summerlin in 6 rounds with a suspected broken jaw after being decked three times. Despite being considered a top contender, Folley never faced heavyweight champion Floyd Patterson. This was partly due to his highly controversial points loss to Henry Cooper in England, in September 1958 (which was later avenged in December 1961 by a two round knockout.).

Folley beat such contenders as Eddie Machen, George Chuvalo, Bob Cleroux (twice), Oscar Bonavena but Oscar got the rematch 3 years later, and Doug Jones. He also had draws with Karl Mildenberger and Eddie Machen (their first fight). Between 1960 and 1962 Folley was knocked out by Sonny Liston, Alejandro Lavorante, and Doug Jones (in the rematch).

It wasn't until March 22, 1967, aged 34, that he faced the world heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali. Folley was knocked out in the 7th round being somewhat past his best. Folley fought for three more years afterward before being knocked out by Mac Foster in 1970.

Folley served as a member of the Chandler City Council, and raising a family of nine children with his wife Joella. Before their fight, Ali joked that Folley was such a nice man that it posed a real problem because he couldn't possibly get mad at him.^[1] Folley was one of the first to call the controversial champion by his Muslim name instead of Cassius Clay. Ali stated he'd respected Folley and was nervous before the match. Folley was the last man to face Ali before Ali's three year exile from boxing in 1967.

In mysterious circumstances, Folley suffered severe head injuries in a motel swimming pool while visiting a friend in Tucson, Arizona on July 8, 1972, and died at a Tucson hospital within hours. The death was officially ruled to be accidental, but conspiracy theories regarding his death persist.

The city of Chandler dedicated Zora Folley Memorial Park in his honor.

2.16.1 Professional boxing record

2.16.2 References

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2.17 Jerry Quarry

Jerry Quarry (May 15, 1945 – January 3, 1999), nicknamed “Irish” or “The Bellflower Bomber,” was an American heavyweight boxer.^[2] Quarry was rated by *Ring Magazine* as the most popular fighter in the sport, from 1968 to 1971, during the peak of his career. His most famous bouts were against world champions Floyd Patterson, Jimmy Ellis, Joe Frazier, Muhammad Ali and Ken Norton.^[3] His professional career record of 53 wins-9 losses-4 draws included wins over some of the best heavyweights of his era, 1965-75. Quarry also had a remarkably successful amateur boxing career. Also briefly a Hollywood actor, Quarry appeared in a number of television roles, and also played a recurring character on the show *Adam-12*. His younger brother, *Mike Quarry*, was also a high-ranked contender in the light heavyweight division.^[4]

2.17.1 Overview

Quarry was a durable and smart counter-puncher/action fighter. He had speed in both hands, including an excellent left hook. He also was notable for having a remarkable chin. He was never knocked out in any of his 66 fights, though some ended early as losses. His major flaw as a fighter was a tendency to cut easily. He was also on the smaller side as a heavyweight in this era. Quarry was six feet tall (1.83 metres) and often weighed less than 200 pounds (88 kilograms) for his matches. he also had what was considered very average reach as a boxer at only 72 inches. Today, he would be a cruiserweight, a division he greatly helped to inspire.

2.17.2 Boxing career

Early days

Quarry was the most visible member of a significant Irish-American boxing family, which included three other pro boxers (his father and two brothers).^{[5][6]} Quarry’s father first put gloves on his son at five years. His career, he later felt, was decided for him at a very

young age. Quarry fought first as a Junior Amateur, winning his first trophies at the age of eight. Later, he contracted nephritis, a debilitating illness which sidelined him for years. His comeback from that illness to become a professional athlete was considered medically remarkable. Quarry came to notice by winning the 1965 National **Golden Gloves** championship in Kansas City at age 19. Weighing just 183 pounds, Quarry knocked out each of his five opponents in the tournament, a feat unmatched before or since in the history of the tournament. In the wake of that unprecedented feat, Quarry began his pro career in May 1965, winning a decision against Gene Hamilton in **Los Angeles, California**.

1960s

Despite starting in May, Quarry had 14 matches in 1965 at the start of his pro career. Many of his early career fights took place at the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles, where he was a popular crowd draw. Quarry supplemented meager boxing pay then by working as a tire changer at a Greyhound bus terminal. Quarry’s first loss came in his 21st bout, in July, 1966, a poor showing against veteran and former contender **Eddie Machen** in 1966. By then he had three draws on his record. Motivated by the loss to Machen, Quarry ran off a streak of wins over good, second-tier heavyweights and rose in the rankings.

In mid-1967, the **World Boxing Association (W.B.A.)** held a tournament to replace **Muhammad Ali**, a heavyweight champion who had been stripped of his title for refusing induction into the military after being drafted. The tournament was expanded to include eight heavyweights, and did not include Joe Frazier, who had accepted a title belt outside the WBA. When the tournament was expanded, Quarry was included. Quarry’s first tournament bout was a rematch of his fourth draw fight earlier that year against former world champion **Floyd Patterson**. In both matches, Quarry dominated the early rounds with multiple knockdowns of Patterson, then tired and faded as the bouts concluded. He hung on better in the second bout, and was given a split-decision victory. His second tournament match was against fellow Californian **Thad Spencer**, who was highly lauded and ranked coming into the match. Quarry dominated Spencer, and rose to national attention with the KO win. This put him in the WBA tournament final against Louisville native **Jimmy Ellis**. Ellis, who was coached by Ali for the bout, fought an effective evasive boxing style in the match, and defeated Quarry by a close split decision. The bout is considered Quarry’s first heavyweight title opportunity. After the bout, according to stories, it was found that Quarry had fought Ellis with a small bone fracture in his back. The bout with Ellis had come less than three months after the Spencer fight, also. After a layoff of six months, Quarry returned after the Ellis loss to post another streak of wins. Notable among these was a lopsided 12-round

decision win over 1964 U.S. Olympian Buster Mathis. The win over the ranked Mathis positioned Quarry for his second title shot.

By then, Joe Frazier had KO'd Ellis to unify the two boxing belts. This first match against Frazier took place June 23rd, 1969. It was Quarry's 38th pro fight and Frazier's 23rd pro fight. Both had turned pro in 1965. The fight was held at New York City's Madison Square Garden, which is where the Mathis fight had also been held three months earlier. This would be the site of a number of Quarry's fights in years to come. During this time, he called New York City his home citing bad press he received in Los Angeles. The fight was cited later by writers and observers for its remarkable early action. Round One was later called "Round Of The Decade" and the bout was later named Ring Magazines "Fight of The Year". Quarry fought a very aggressive fight to please the crowds after the lacklustre Ellis match, going head-to-head in the center of the ring with Frazier, and fighting Frazier's kind of fight. Judges gave Quarry the edge in points for the first two rounds as he landed the more punches with his greater speed and combination punching. But as he was slugging with the slugger, he began to fade under the fast pace of the war and hard punches of Frazier. He was cut badly by Frazier in the third round but continued on. Unable to hurt Frazier at this point and receiving many unanswered shots, the fight was stopped after the 7th round due to the cut. He was well behind in scoring at this point. There were no knockdowns in the bout, which was an impressive fact given all the hard punches landed.

Returning quickly after the loss to Frazier, Quarry won two bouts before meeting Canadian George Chuvalo in December, 1969. The bout against Chuvalo, then unranked would be the subject of controversy. Quarry easily led the bout after the first six rounds, effectively boxing the Canadian puncher. In the 7th round, Chuvalo caught Quarry with a surprise right hand that knocked the Californian off his feet. Quarry rose at the count of four, then took a knee so that he could rest while taking the rest of the ten-second count. Rising exactly at the count of ten, referee Zach Clayton ruled that Quarry was counted out. Quarry, visibly unhurt, disputed the ruling, but it was counted as a loss nonetheless.

On one episode of *I Dream Of Jeannie*, a sitcom of the 1960s Jerry played himself as a trainer for astronaut Tony Nelson (Larry Hagman).

1970s

Quarry returned quickly after the controversial loss to Chuvalo to post another streak of wins. Noteworthy among them was a 6th-round KO win over fellow Californian Mac Foster. Foster came into the bout ranked #1 with a record of 24-0, with all 24 wins by KO. Quarry was ranked #6, and weighed 195 for the bout. Foster weighed 215. It was a very impressive, dominating win

by Quarry which figured to put him back in line for another title shot. At this time, exiled former champion Muhammad Ali had successfully sued to win the right to return as a professional boxer. Ali approached every one of the ten ranked heavyweights then for a match. Quarry was the only one willing to face him, and so got the nod for the first bout against Ali in his return. The bout received tremendous publicity and arguably remains today as Quarry's most famous bout.^[7] The bout took place at the City Auditorium in Atlanta, Georgia on October 26, 1970. Ali dominated the first two rounds, moving well and scoring with his left jab and combinations. Quarry was able to land only a handful of punches, most of them glancing blows. In the third round, Quarry was badly cut by a right hand over his left eye following an exchange with Ali. Trainer Teddy Bentham, a veteran cut man, realized the cut was too severe for Quarry to continue, even though he argued to continue. Referee Tony Perez waved the bout over before the start of the 4th round, which was ruled a 3rd round technical KO. Quarry disputed the decision and demanded a rematch against Ali, which he would later receive.^[8]

Following the loss to Ali, Quarry had his second six-month layoff. He focused on television roles during this period, appearing on a number of television shows. In June, 1971, he returned to start another streak of wins. Noteworthy among them was a revenge of his earlier draw against tall Tony Doyle at the Playboy Club in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin with a lopsided decision. He then KO'd British and European champion Jack Bodell in the first round. That fight was held in London. His second fight there during this streak was against Larry Middleton. Middleton was the kind of tall, quick boxer with long reach who often gave Quarry trouble in bouts. Quarry won a very narrow, controversial decision against Middleton. By then, Quarry had lobbied long and hard for a rematch against Ali. He finally was allowed that rematch a month after the Middleton bout. The second bout against Ali, no longer champion at this point, took place at the Las Vegas Convention Center on June 27, 1972. Their match was the headlining bout of a fight card that Ali called "The Soul Brothers Versus The Quarry Brothers." Bob Arum promoted the fight, with Ali playing up the obvious racial differences between his black fighters and the white Quarries. In an earlier bout, Jerry's brother Mike, a high-ranked light heavyweight contender was KO'd by Light heavyweight champion and devastating puncher Bob Foster, and seriously injured. Ali weighed 216 for their bout, Quarry 198. The bout was eventful. At the opening bell, Quarry rushed Ali, got under his shoulders and lifted him briefly off the canvas before Referee Mike Kaplan separated the fighters. During the whole fight, Quarry had his injured brother on his mind and barely put up a fight. Visibly tired at the end of the 6th round, Quarry came out for the seventh and was hit by a half-dozen shots by Ali, who waved the referee in to stop the fight, which Quarry protested. The bout was a difficult night for the Quarry family in general, who were

the object of racial insults from black fight fans and Ali / King supporters. This Ali bout magnified for observers the racial overtones that existed throughout Quarry's career. Greatly supported by white Americans, he had been called a 'white hope', or "The Great White Hope". He was also therefore derided by many black American boxing fans of the era for the same reason.

That racially inflamed loss to Ali behind him, Quarry, now managed by Gil Clancy, bounced back to post yet another streak of impressive wins. He seemed to mature as a fighter here, and 1973 was perhaps his greatest year as a heavyweight.

Despite deterioration in his movement and reflexes, and now having very scarred facial tissue, Quarry gave possibly the two best performances of his career next. After defeating 21-2 Randy Neumann in January, Quarry was placed into a bout similar to his previous Mac Foster match, as a ranked tune-up for a higher ranked contender. Ron Lyle was 19-0 with 17 knockouts, and the tough ex-convict was in line for a title shot when he met Quarry in February. The 6' 3 Lyle weighed 219 for the bout, Quarry 200. Despite trailing early on, Quarry took control of the fight in the middle rounds and, in perhaps his best performance, thoroughly outboxed Lyle for a lopsided 12-round decision win in an action packed fight. During this time, Quarry also got a chance to show off his overall athletic ability. On the ABC television show "The Superstars", Quarry was invited to compete against other heavyweight boxers in the series of athletic contests the show was known for. Winning that competition, he qualified for the Superstars final that year, and finished fourth to three NFL football players, an impressive showing. Noteworthy in those performances was his impressive ability to hit a baseball. Two wins later, Don King brought Quarry in to meet hard-punching Earnie Shavers in December. Shavers was 46-2 with 44 KOs. In another bout filled with the same racial overtones as the second Ali bout, Quarry surprised Shavers. After receiving a few hard shots, he landed a big punch in the 1st round and followed that up to win a stunning first-round KO win. The incensed King reportedly left Shavers in the ring and tore up his contract to manage him. Heavyweight champion George Foreman was in attendance, and negotiations for a title bout were already in motion for mid-1974. After the Shavers bout, Foreman reportedly backed away from that proposed bout.^[9] He later claimed to have dodged Quarry, who he never formally met in the ring. Quarry later claimed to be 'locked out' of big-opportunity fights in 1974 by King, and found himself desperately looking for quality opponents that might get him a title shot. In June, 1974, he agreed to rematch Joe Frazier. Quarry was the same size as at their first bout, but Frazier, now 212 pounds, was bigger. Quarry attempted to box Frazier this time, but due to the years of punishment, even in the recent wins against hard hitters Lyle and Shavers, he was more open to Frazier's shots and less mobile than he use to be. Straight away, a determined Frazier be-

gan to connect hard punches at the physically diminished Quarry who couldn't muster the movement to evade Frazier. Staggering him with a trademark left hook at the end of the first round, Frazier exposed to the world that Quarry had lost his once great punch resistance. Frazier then began landing solidly with both hands to Quarry's head and body, beginning a sickening beat down. Quarry was already on wobbly legs when Frazier dropped with a hard left hook to the stomach just before the bell ending the 4th round. Quarry was visibly injured by the blow, but tried unsuccessfully to continue. The fight continued, with Frazier backing away from Quarry after opening up bad cuts over both eyes. Joe Louis, however, waved Frazier back on. After landing a few more clean head shots, Louis finally stopped the fight early in the 5th round, a one sided thrashing. Louis never refereed another fight.^[10]

Quarry by now was not the same fighter he used to be, his reflexes and punch resistance were much diminished. But he was still a talented big-name that could attract crowds. He had made millions in the ring without ever being champion at a time when few had ever made that much money in boxing. He continued his television acting work, and had by now briefly helped road-manage the rock band Three Dog Night. After a win in February, 1975, Quarry begged to put in line for a fight with contender Ken Norton. When first choices Oscar Bonavena and Jimmy Young bowed out with injuries, Quarry was placed into the Norton bout on 18 days notice. Norton had been training for five months. The Norton fight was Quarry's 62nd pro fight. Norton, who was about the same age as Quarry, was 32-3. The 6' 3 Norton weighed 218 for the bout, Quarry 207 with little training beforehand. Clancy was once again in Quarry's corner. The fight took place March 24, 1975. The fight was a war of hard punches, with Norton connecting well early against a Jerry Quarry with shot reflexes, a sitting duck for Norton's vicious attacks. He was cut badly in the 3rd round, and attacked Norton so that he would have a chance to win before the fight was stopped. Norton survived a tough Quarry attack and continued his assault. The fight was stopped in the 5th round after Quarry came under a barrage of clean shots to the head. There were many calls for him to retire afterwards as it was evident in the Frazier and Norton fights that he was a 'shot' fighter.

Retirement

Quarry retired for over two and a half years after the Norton fight. His career record was at 50-8-4 at this time, with 32 wins by KO. He had two losses each to Frazier and Ali plus one apiece to Norton, Chuvalo, Ellis and Machen to this point. He had been ranked as high as the #1 contender three times. Well-paid and very popular, it was an outstanding boxing career to this point. Arguably, Hall Of Fame caliber. At around this time, Quarry signed a contract with ABC (American Broadcasting Corpora-

tion) to be a boxing commentator. Quarry was very popular in this position, drawing the ire of Howard Cosell, an ABC commentator being pushed out of some work by Quarry. In mid-1977, a return match was being put together which would put Quarry in against a ranked heavyweight. The ranked heavyweight would be Italian Lorenzo Zanon. The match was to be televised on ABC, where Quarry was contracted. But both fighters signed to have the bout televised on CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System). When Quarry, who often negotiated his own fight contracts, signed the bout to CBS, he lost his ABC contract. The comeback match took place in November 1977, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. Quarry, weighing 209, looked slow and a shell of his former self, was clearly outboxed over seven rounds by Zanon. But Quarry caught him with a hard right in the 8th round, and won the fight by KO in the 9th. Despite winning, it was a poor performance, and Quarry retired again afterward, this time for almost six years.

During those years, Quarry was married and divorced twice. He also lost a great deal of his fortune in failed business investments. No longer doing television work, he decided to return to the ring. With the Cruiserweight division now created, Quarry returned in that weight class. When he returned in August, 1983, he was 38 years old, and had been inspired by a similar late-career comeback by George Foreman. Though appearing to be in good health, Quarry was in fact already beginning to show the effects of his lengthy boxing career. A *Sports Illustrated* reporter was researching an article about health problems among retired boxers, especially among those who started as child boxers. The reporter met Quarry, and although he appeared to be in good health, Quarry's performance on several simple cognitive tests was shockingly poor.^[11] This was the harbinger of the mental decline that would eventually destroy the last part of his life - dementia pugilistica, the atrophy of the brain from repeated blows to the head, eventually leading to an Alzheimer's-like state. A 1983 CT scan of Quarry's brain done for the article and confidently agreed to by him, showed classic evidence of brain atrophy, including the characteristic cavum septi pellucidi found in many boxers with long careers. Despite these developing facts, Quarry had two wins in 1983, but the fights accelerated his mental decline. He retired again and was inactive as a boxer from 1984 to 1992, but Quarry continued to decline physically and mentally.^[12] His entire boxing fortune completely gone by 1990, Quarry filed for Social Security at age 45.^[13] Denied a boxing license in any states because of his condition, Quarry found a loophole in Colorado^{[14][15]} that allowed him to schedule an October 30, 1992 bout with Ron Cramner, a cruiserweight 16 years Quarry's junior. At age 47 years and 6 months old, Quarry provided nothing more than a 6 round punching bag for the younger fighter, losing all six rounds and the decision. Only Quarry's courage and great chin let him last the full 6 rounds. Quarry was never the same after that fight.

2.17.3 Physical and mental decline

Within a few years of his final bout, Quarry was unable to feed or dress himself and had to be cared for by relatives, mainly his brother James - the only one of the four Quarry brothers not to box professionally.^[16] Jerry's brother, Mike, who had contended for the light-heavyweight championship, was himself beginning to show signs of *Dementia pugilistica* in later life and died as a result on June 11, 2006. Another brother, Bobby, suffers from *Parkinson's disease*, believed to be the result of his own, less-heralded heavyweight boxing career.

Jerry Quarry was inducted into the World Boxing Hall of Fame in 1995.^[17] A TV documentary showed he seemed barely aware of the proceedings, the dementia he suffered now severe. Quarry was hospitalized with pneumonia on December 28, 1998 and then suffered cardiac arrest. He never regained consciousness and died on January 3, 1999. He is interred at Shafter Cemetery in Shafter, California. A foundation was established in his honor to battle boxing-related dementia, a condition that has afflicted many boxers and brought Quarry's life to an early end.^[18]

Legacy

Quarry's overall professional record was 53-9-4 with 32 KOs. He had been lauded by countless younger boxing stars as an inspiring star in the sport. Said Joe Frazier, in his autobiography, of Quarry: "A very tough man. He could have been a world champion, but he cut too easily." George Foreman has also similarly lauded Quarry. Quarry fought in what has been called " The Golden Age Of Heavyweight Boxing ", where the talent level of the sport and its level of national interest were at a peak. The sport of boxing, and the heavyweight division in particular, have generally declined in interest within the following decades. This is at least partly due to the number of injuries and illnesses that are associated with the sport. Quarry, Muhammad Ali and others notable boxing stars were and are debilitated figures in their post-career lives.^{[19][16]}

2.17.4 Professional boxing record

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2.17.6 External links

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- Jerry Quarry Foundation web site
- The Boxing Brothers
- Find-A-Grave profile for Jerry Quarry
- “pressure doesn't psych me” quote at Merriam-Webster
- Boxer Jerry Quarry Remembered

2.18 Oscar Bonavena

Oscar Natalio “Ringo” Bonavena (September 25, 1942 – May 22, 1976) was an Argentinian heavyweight professional boxer with a career record of 58 wins, 9 losses and 1 draw. A rugged, wild-swinging puncher, he was nicknamed “Ringo” because of his Beatles haircut, and enjoyed professional success in both Argentina and the United States. He is most famous for giving both Joe Frazier and Muhammad Ali tough battles.

2.18.1 Life and pro career

Oscar Natalio Bonavena was born in Buenos Aires.

2.18.2 Early career

Bonavena began his early career in New York under the management of World War II hero and dentist, Marvin Goldberg. He was known as “The Argentine Strong-Boy”.

His pro debut was on February 1, 1964. He soon racked up a quick string of early knockouts, but was overmatched early, sometimes fighting twice a month, and lost by a decision in February 1965 to then highly rated Zora Folley. Bonavena was in only his 15th contest and was far too inexperienced to then really tackle a top veteran like Folley. It was a one sided contest with Bonavena getting up off the deck from a smart right hand. Even courageous Oscar looked discouraged and shaken at times in the later rounds. However, three years later with far more experience and training he won their rematch by decision.

After that, he returned to Argentina, where his winning and knockout streak continued. But in mid 1966 he was enticed back to New York for a match with rugged contender George Chuvalo.

The free-swinging Bonavena soon ran into trouble outside the ring. He called Muhammad Ali a black kangaroo and even a chicken for draft dodging. Ali was furious. Oscar was one of the few people to upstage Ali in pre-fight press

conferences. When, much later, he saw Ali seated ring-side at the **George Foreman-Ken Norton** fight, he went over and started a big slanging match. In his pre-fight press conference with Frazier, Bonavena needled effectively by implying that Frazier had a personal hygiene problem. He would start sniffing and grimace. Lawsuits were brought about by reporters with broken cameras; and other such “colorful” behavior. He was always volatile, as trainers soon discovered.^{[1][2]}

Big name contests, Chualo and Frazier

Bonavena first came to wide public attention after a fine performance defeating rated contender and Canadian champion **George Chualo**, boxing technically better than expected and later going the distance against the young hard-hitting great **Joe Frazier**. In this their first fight, Bonavena had the future champion down twice in the second round before Frazier rallied to win by decision in the 10th round.

WBA elimination contests

In 1967, after the **World Boxing Association** stripped **Muhammad Ali** of the title for refusing to be inducted into the U.S. military, Bonavena participated in that sanctioning body’s 1967 tournament to crown a new heavyweight champion. In a strong performance he decked favoured European champion **Karl Mildenerger** four times,^[3] winning by a decision in Frankfurt, West Germany. But he was himself knocked down twice and clearly outboxed by eventual tournament winner **Jimmy Ellis** in the semi-finals in Louisville, losing by unanimous decision in an upset. Many deemed it the best win of Ellis’s career.^[4] Incidentally, Bonavena had been scheduled to fight Ali in Tokyo in May 1967, but the bout was not to be when Ali was stripped of his title. They’d match later.

World Title shot, the Frazier rematch

The following year, in 1968, after outpointing **Leotis Martin**, he got a rematch with Frazier for the heavyweight title in Philadelphia. After a grueling fifteen rounds Bonavena lost the rematch by decision, fighting more defensively than previous. He did leave with a seriously battered face photographed in the Ring magazine. However, he had won respect.

In 1969 he got a draw in a rematch with talented **Gregorio Peralta**, who he’d outpointed four years earlier for the Argentine title, and won his three other contests by knockout.

Versus Ali

In December 1970, he fought Ali at Madison Square Garden, in the former champ’s second bout after his three-year layoff. Bonavena absorbed punishment throughout but fought well, getting through with various head and body punches. However, in the 15th round, Ali caught Oscar rushing in and decked him with a perfectly placed left hook. Bonavena got up, but was clearly not fully recovered. Ali decked him twice more, and the fight was automatically stopped under the three knockdown rule, giving Ali a TKO (technical knockout). The ending was somewhat controversial, as Ali stood over Bonavena as Bonavena was getting up, never going to a neutral corner as the rules of boxing require, which allowed Ali to quickly knockdown Bonavena twice more and automatically end the fight.^{[5][6]} The knockout by Ali was the only time in Bonavena’s career he lost by a knockout.

Other matches

After the loss to Ali in 1970 he had a brutally tough match with underrated **Alvin Lewis**. Bonavena fought intermittently for the next few years. A gregarious party man, he enjoyed life fully.

Eventually losses to **Floyd Patterson** in 1972 and **Ron Lyle** in 1974 effectively put him to lower ranking contender status, although he did well enough in both these matches. In the Patterson fight he broke his left hand early, possibly after decking Patterson in the fourth, and remained an advancing threat to the final bell. It was around 1973 a possible match with a then on the rise **Ken Norton** was being planned but, unfortunately for fans, it never materialised.^[7]

On February 26, 1976, overweight and sluggish Bonavena fought what would be his last fight, winning a ten-round decision over the unranked **Billy Joiner** in Reno.^[8]

2.18.3 Death

Joe Conforte, owner of the **Mustang Ranch** brothel near Reno, Nevada, brought Bonavena to Reno in 1975 to promote a series of fights and to train on the 440-acre (1.8 km²) property. Bonavena became friendly with Conforte’s wife **Sally Burgess**, 26 years Bonavena’s senior, and the two flirted openly.^[8] A later investigation concluded that they began an affair.^[9] He signed a contract making the former madam his manager, although she had never managed a fighter before. He gained weight and his condition deteriorated.

The ranch had been burned down by apparent arson some months earlier, and had been rebuilt, with over 100 bedrooms and fancy suites that included a “Blue Room”. **Joe Conforte** was not present at the grand reopening in early May 1976, but Bonavena circulated among the 4000

guests, smoking big cigars and greeting some with “How you like my new joint?”^[8]

Conforte banished Bonavena and Sally Burgess from the ranch two days later. They were warned to stay away, and guards were ordered to stop them if they tried to re-enter. Conforte moved out of the family house in town he shared with Sally, and into the Blue Room. Willard Ross Brymer, Conforte’s ex-convict personal bodyguard and security guard at the ranch, was recalled from a trip. Brymer cleaned out Bonavena’s trailer, and burned his papers and clothes in the street. At the family house, Sally was plagued by utility shutoffs and other harassment.^[8]

On May 19, Sally and Bonavena complained to the county sheriff about the harassment and drove to San Francisco (about 230 miles) to replace Bonavena’s burned passport. They stayed overnight, taking adjoining rooms, and returned to Reno the next day.^[8]

At 6:00 a.m. on Saturday May 22, Bonavena drove up to the locked gate at the Mustang Ranch and rang the bell. He exchanged words with an unarmed guard and demanded to see Conforte. Brymer stepped through the kitchen door with a high-powered rifle. The guard at the gate told Bonavena to leave. As Bonavena stepped behind his car, someone said “freeze” and Bonavena was shot through the heart, either by Brymer or from a rear guard tower.^{[8][10][11]} A snub-nosed .38 revolver was found in his boot. Four days later, Sally returned to the ranch and took over, firing the armed guards and the ex-convicts.^[8]

An investigation concluded that Bonavena was having an affair with Sally and had bragged about taking over the Mustang Ranch,^[9] and that guards had orders to shoot Bonavena if he showed up.^[12] Originally charged with murder, Brymer pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and served only 15 months in prison.^[12]

Bonavena’s body was returned to Argentina to lie in state at the Luna Park sports arena in Buenos Aires, where 150,000 people filed by. He is buried in the La Chacarita Cemetery in Buenos Aires.

2.18.4 Professional boxing record

2.18.5 See also

- Luis Ángel Firpo
- José María Gatica
- Justo Suárez

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2.19 Joe Frazier

For other uses, see Joe Frazier (disambiguation).

Joseph William “Joe” Frazier (January 12, 1944 – November 7, 2011), nicknamed “Smokin’ Joe”, was an American professional boxer, Olympic gold medalist and undisputed world heavyweight champion, whose professional career lasted from 1965 to 1976, with a one-fight comeback in 1981. Frazier was known for his sheer strength, durability, punch power and all-out relentless attack.

Frazier emerged as the top contender in the late 1960s, defeating opponents that included Jerry Quarry, Oscar Bonavena, Buster Mathis, Eddie Machen, Doug Jones, George Chuvalo and Jimmy Ellis en route to becoming undisputed heavyweight champion in 1970, and followed up by defeating Muhammad Ali by unanimous decision in the highly anticipated "Fight of the Century" in 1971. Two years later Frazier lost his title when he was knocked out by George Foreman. He fought on, beating Joe Bugner, losing a rematch to Ali and beating Quarry and Ellis again.

Frazier's last world title challenge came in 1975, but he was beaten by Ali in their brutal rubbermatch. He retired in 1976 following a second loss to Foreman. He made a comeback in 1981, fighting just once, before retiring. The International Boxing Research Organization (IBRO) rates Frazier among the ten greatest heavyweights of all time.^[2] In 1999, *The Ring* magazine ranked him the 8th greatest heavyweight.^[3] He is an inductee of both the International Boxing Hall of Fame and the World Boxing Hall of Fame.

Frazier's style was often compared to that of Henry Armstrong and occasionally Rocky Marciano, dependent on bobbing, weaving and relentless pressure to wear down his opponents. His best known punch was a powerful left hook, which accounted for most of his knockouts. In his career he lost to only two fighters, both former Olympic and world heavyweight champions: twice to Muhammad Ali, and twice to George Foreman.

After retiring, Frazier made cameo appearances in several Hollywood movies, and two episodes of *The Simpsons*. His son Marvis became a boxer—trained by Frazier himself—but was unable to match his father's success. His daughter Jackie Frazier-Lyde also boxed professionally. Frazier continued to train fighters in his gym in Philadelphia. His later years saw periodic insults and bitter feelings towards Ali, interspersed with brief reconciliations.

Frazier was diagnosed with liver cancer in late September 2011 and admitted to hospice care.^[4] He died November 7, 2011.^[5]

2.19.1 Early life

Joe Frazier was the 12th child born to Dolly Alston-Frazier and Ruben in Beaufort, South Carolina. He was raised in a rural community of Beaufort called Laurel Bay.^[6]^[7] Frazier said he was always close to his father, who carried him when he was a toddler "over the 10 acres of farmland" the Fraziers worked as sharecroppers "to the still where he made his bootleg corn liquor, and into town on Saturdays to buy the necessities that a family of 10 needed." Young Frazier was affectionately called "Billie Boy."^[6]

Rubin Frazier had his left hand burned and part of his

forearm amputated in a tractor accident the year his son was born. Ruben Frazier and his wife Dolly had been in their car when Arthur Smith, who unfortunately was drunk, passed by and made a move for Dolly and was rebuffed. Stefan Gallucci, a local barkeep, recounted the experience. When the Fraziers drove away Smith fired at them several times, hitting Dolly in the foot and Ruben several times in his arm. Smith was convicted and sent to prison, but he did not stay long. Dolly Frazier said, "If you were a good workman, the white man took you out of jail and kept you busy on the farm."^[8]

Frazier's parents worked their farm with two mules, named Buck and Jenny. The farm land was what country people called "white dirt, which is another way of saying it isn't worth a damn." They could not grow peas or corn on it, only cotton and watermelons.^[8]

In the early 1950s, Frazier's father bought a black and white television. The family and others nearby came to watch boxing matches on it. Frazier's mother sold drinks for a quarter as they watched boxers like Sugar Ray Robinson, Rocky Marciano, Willie Pep and Rocky Graziano. One night Frazier's Uncle Israel noticed his stocky build. "That boy there...that boy is gonna be another Joe Louis" he remarked. The words made an impression on Joe. His classmates at school would give him a sandwich or a quarter to walk with them at final bell so that bullies would not bother them. Frazier said, "Any 'scamboogah' (a disrespectful, low-down and foul person) who got in my face would soon regret it; Billie Boy could kick anybody's ass." The day after his Uncle's comment, Frazier filled old burlap sack with rags, corncobs, a brick, and Spanish moss. He hung the makeshift heavybag from an oak tree in the backyard. "For the next 6, 7 years, damn near every day I'd hit that heavybag for an hour at a time. I'd wrap my hands with a necktie of my Daddy's, or a stocking of my Momma's or sister's, and get to it" Joe remarked.^[9]

Not long after Frazier started working, his left arm was seriously injured running the family's 300 pound hog. One day Frazier poked the hog with a stick and ran away. However, the gate to the pigpen was open and the hog chased him. Frazier fell and hit his left arm on a brick. His arm was torn badly, but as the family could not afford a doctor, the arm had to heal on its own. Joe was never able to keep it fully straight again.^[10]

By the time Frazier was 15 years old, he was working on a farm for a family named Bellamy. They were both white men, Mac who was the younger of the two and more easy going, and Jim who was a little rougher and somewhat backward. One day a little black boy of about 12 years old, damaged one of the Bellamy's tractors without meaning to. Jim Bellamy became so enraged he took off his belt and whipped the boy with his belt right there in the field. Joe saw the event and went back to the packing house on the farm and told his black friends what he had seen. It wasn't long before Jim Bellamy saw Joe and

asked him why he told what he had witnessed. Joe then told Bellamy he didn't know what he was talking about, but Bellamy didn't believe Joe and threatened Joe to get off the farm before he took off his belt again. Joe told him he better keep his pants up because he wasn't going to use his belt on him. Jim then analyzed Joe for a bit and eventually said "Go on, get the hell outta here." Joe knew from that moment it was time for him to leave Beaufort; he could only see hard times and low-rent for himself. Even his Momma could see it. She told Joe "Son, if you can't get along with the white folks, then leave home because I don't want anything to happen to you."^[11]

The train fare from Beaufort to the cities up North was costly, and the closest bus-stop was in Charleston, 96 miles (154 km) away. Luckily by 1958, the bus (*The Dog*, as called by locals in Beaufort) had finally made Beaufort a stop on its South Carolina route. Joe had a brother, Tommy, in New York. He was told he could stay with Tommy and his family. Joe had to save up a bit before he could make the bus trip to New York and still have some money in his pocket, and so first he went to work at the local Coca-Cola plant. Joe remarked that the white guy would drive the truck and he would do the real work, stacking and unloading the crates. Joe stayed with Coca-Cola until the government began building houses for the marines stationed at Parris Island; at which time he was hired on a work crew.

Nine months eventually passed since he got the boot from the Bellamy farm. One day, with no fanfare, no tearful goodbyes, Joe packed quickly and got the first bus heading northward. He finally settled in Philadelphia, "I climbed on the Dog's back and rode through the night" Joe remarked. "It was 1959, I was 15 years old and I was on my own."^[12]

2.19.2 Amateur career

During Frazier's amateur career, he won Golden Gloves Heavyweight Championships in 1962, 1963 and 1964. His only loss in three years as an amateur was to **Buster Mathis**.^[13] Mathis would prove to be Joe's biggest obstacle to making the 1964 U.S. Olympic Boxing team. They met in the final of the U.S. Olympic Trial at the New York World's Fair in the summer of 1964. Their fight was scheduled for three rounds and they fought with 10 oz gloves and with headgear, even though the boxers who made it to Tokyo would wear no headgear and would wear 8 oz gloves. Joe was eager to get back at Mathis for his only amateur loss and KO'd two opponents to get to the finals. But once again, when the dust settled, the judges had called it for Mathis, undeservedly Joe thought. "All that fat boy had done was run like a thief- hit me with a peck and backpedal like crazy." Joe would remark.^[13]

Mathis had worn his trunks very high, so that when Joe hit Mathis with legitimate body shots the referee took a dim view of them. In the second round, the referee had

gone so far as to penalize Joe two points for hitting below the belt. "In a three-round bout a man can't afford a points deduction like that," Joe would say. Joe then returned to Philadelphia feeling as low as he'd ever been and was even thinking of giving up boxing. Duke Dugent and his trainer Yank Durham were able to talk Joe out of his doldrums and even suggested Joe make the trip to Tokyo as an alternate, in case something happened to Mathis. Joe agreed and while there, he was a workhorse, sparring with any of the Olympic boxers who wanted some action. "Middleweight, light heavyweight, it didn't matter to me, I got in there and boxed all comers" Joe would say. In contrast, Mathis was slacking off. In the morning, when the Olympic team would do their roadwork, Mathis would run a mile, then start walking saying "Go ahead, big Joe. I'll catch up." His amateur record was 38-2.^[14]

2.19.3 1964 Olympics

In 1964 heavyweight representative Buster Mathis qualified but was injured so Frazier was sent as a replacement. At the **Heavyweight boxing** event, Frazier knocked out **George Oywello** of **Uganda** in the first round, then knocked out **Athol McQueen** of **Australia** 40 seconds into the third round. He was then into the semi-final, as the only American boxer left, facing the 6 foot 4, 230 lb. **Vadim Yemelyanov** of the Soviet Union.^[15]

"My left hook was a heat seeking missile, careening off his face and body time and again. Twice in the second round I knocked him to the canvas. But as I pounded away, I felt a jolt of pain shoot through my left arm. *Oh damn, the thumb.*" Joe would say. Joe knew immediately the thumb of his left hand was damaged, though he wasn't sure as to the extent. "In the midst of the fight, with your adrenaline pumping, it's hard to gauge such things. My mind was on more important matters. Like how I was going to deal with Yemelyanov for the rest of the fight." The match ended when the Soviet's handlers threw in the towel at 1:49 in the second round, and the referee raised Joe's injured hand in victory.

Now that Joe was into the final, he didn't mention his broken thumb to anyone. He went back to his room and soaked his thumb in hot water and Epsom salts. "Pain or not, Joe Frazier of Beaufort, South Carolina, was going for gold." Joe proclaimed. Joe would fight a 30-year-old German mechanic named **Hans Huber**, who failed to make it on the German Olympic wrestling team. By now Joe was used to fighting bigger guys, but he was not used to doing it with a damaged left hand. When the opening bell sounded on fight night, Joe came out and started winging punches, he threw his right hand more than usual that night. Every so often he'd used his left hook, but nothing landed with the kind of impact he managed in previous bouts. Under Olympic rules, 5 judges judge a bout, and that night three voted for Joe.^[16]

2.19.4 Professional career

After Frazier won the USA's only 1964 Olympic boxing gold medal, his trainer Yancey "Yank" Durham helped put together Cloverlay, a group of local businessmen (including a young Larry Merchant) who invested in Frazier's professional career and allowed him to train full-time. Durham was Frazier's chief trainer and manager until Durham's death in August 1973.

Frazier turned professional in 1965, defeating Woody Goss by a technical knockout in the first round. He won three more fights that year, all by knockout, none going past the third round. Later that year, he was in a training accident, where he suffered an injury which left him legally blind in his left eye.^[17] During pre-fight physicals, after reading the eye chart with his right eye, when prompted to cover his other eye, Frazier switched hands, but covered his left eye for a second time, and state athletic commission physicians seemed willing to turn a blind eye to the injury.^[18]

Joe's second contest was of interest in that he was decked in round 1 by Mike Bruce. Frazier took an "8" count by referee Bob Polis but rallied for a TKO over Bruce in round 3.^[19]

In 1966, as Frazier's career was taking off, Durham contacted Los Angeles trainer Eddie Futch. The two men had never met, but Durham had heard of Futch through the latter's reputation as one of the most respected trainers in boxing. Frazier was sent to Los Angeles to train, before Futch agreed to join Durham as an assistant trainer. With Futch's assistance, Durham arranged three fights in Los Angeles against journeyman Al Jones, veteran contender Eddie Machen and George "Scrap Iron" Johnson. Frazier knocked out Jones and Machen, but surprisingly went 10 rounds with journeyman Johnson to win a unanimous decision. Johnson had apparently bet all his purse that he'd survive to the final bell, noted *Ring Magazine*, and somehow he achieved it. But Johnson was known in the trade as "impossibly durable".

After the Johnson match, Futch became a full-fledged member of the Frazier camp as an assistant trainer and strategist, who advised Durham on matchmaking. It was Futch who suggested that Frazier boycott the 1967 WBA Heavyweight Elimination Tournament to find a successor to Muhammad Ali after the Heavyweight Champion was stripped of his title for refusing to be inducted into the military, although Frazier was the top-ranked contender at the time.

Futch proved invaluable to Frazier as an assistant trainer, helping modify his style. Under his tutelage, Frazier adopted the bob-and-weave defensive style, making him more difficult for taller opponents to punch, while giving Frazier more power with his own punches. While Futch remained based in Los Angeles, where he worked as a supervisor with the U.S. Postal Service, he was flown to Philadelphia to work with Frazier during the final prepara-

tions for all of his fights.

After Durham died of a stroke on August 30, 1973, Futch was asked to succeed him as Frazier's head trainer and manager—at the same time he was training heavyweight contender Ken Norton. Norton lost a rematch against Ali less than two weeks after Durham's death. At that point, Norton's managers, Robert Biron and Aaron Rivkind, demanded that Futch choose between training Frazier and Norton, with Futch choosing Frazier.

Mid to late 1960s

Now in his second year, in September 1966 and somewhat green, Frazier won a close decision over rugged contender Oscar Bonavena, despite Bonavena flooring him twice in the second round. A third knockdown in that round would have ended the fight under the three knock-down rule. Frazier rallied and won a decision after 12 rounds. The Machen win followed this contest.

In 1967 Frazier stormed ahead winning all six of his fights, including a sixth-round knockout of Doug Jones and a brutal fourth round (TKO) of Canadian George Chuvalo. No boxer had ever stopped Chuvalo before, although Frazier, despite the stoppage, was unable to floor Chuvalo, who would never be dropped in his entire career despite him fighting countless top names.

By February 1967 Joe had scored 14 wins and his star was beginning to rise. This culminated with his first appearance on the cover of *Ring Magazine*. In this month he met Ali, who hadn't yet been stripped of his title. Ali said Joe would never stand a chance of "whipping" him, not even in his wildest dreams. Later that year, Muhammad Ali was stripped of his world heavyweight title due to his refusal to be inducted into the military during the Vietnam War.

To fill the vacancy, the New York State Athletic Commission held a bout between Frazier and Buster Mathis, both undefeated going into the match, with the winner to be recognized as "World Champion" by the state of New York. Although the fight was not recognized as a World Championship bout by some, Frazier won by a knockout in the 11th round and staked a claim to the Heavyweight Championship. He then defended his claim by beating hard hitting prospect Manuel Ramos of Mexico in two rounds.

He closed 1968 by again beating Oscar Bonavena via a 15-round decision in a hard-fought rematch. Bonavena fought somewhat defensively, allowing himself to be often bulled to the ropes, which let Frazier build a wide points margin. *Ring Magazine* showed Bonavena afterwards with a gruesomely bruised face. It had been a punishing match.

1969 saw Frazier defend his NYSAC title in Texas, beating Dave Zyglewicz, who'd only lost once in 29 fights, by a first-round knockout. Then he beat Jerry Quarry in

a 7th round stoppage. The competitive, exciting match with Quarry was named 1969 *Ring Magazine* fight of the year. Frazier showed he could do a lot more than just slug. He'd used his newly honed defensive skills to slip, bob and weave a barrage of Quarry punches despite Quarry's reputation as an excellent counter punching heavyweight.

Wins World Championship – Ellis

On February 16, 1970, Frazier faced WBA Champion Jimmy Ellis at Madison Square Garden. Ellis had out-pointed Jerry Quarry in the final bout of the WBA elimination tournament for Ali's vacated belt. Frazier had himself declined to participate with the WBA tournament to protest their decision to strip Ali. Ellis held an impressive win over Oscar Bonavena among others. Beforehand, Ali had announced his retirement and relinquished the Heavyweight title, allowing Ellis and Frazier to fight for the undisputed title. Frazier won by a TKO when Ellis's trainer Angelo Dundee would not let him come out for the 5th round following two 4th round knockdowns (the first knockdowns of Ellis's career). Frazier's decisive win over Ellis was a frightening display of power and tenacity.

In his first title defense, Frazier traveled to Detroit to fight World Light Heavyweight Champion Bob Foster, who would go on to set a record for the number of title defenses in the light-heavyweight division. Frazier (26–0) retained his title by twice flooring the hard punching Foster in the second round. The second knock down came on a devastating left hook and Foster could not beat the count. Then came what was hyped as the "Fight Of The Century," his first fight with Muhammad Ali, who had launched a comeback in 1970 after a three-year suspension from boxing. This would be the first meeting of two undefeated heavyweight champions (and last until Mike Tyson faced Michael Spinks in 1988), since Ali (31–0) had not lost his title in the ring, but rather been stripped because of his refusal to be conscripted into the Armed Forces, some considered him to be the true champion. This fight was to crown the one, true heavyweight champion.

Fight of the Century - versus Ali 1st fight

On March 8, 1971, at Madison Square Garden, Frazier and Ali met in the first of their three bouts which was called the "Fight of the Century" in pre-bout publicity and by the press.^[20] With an international television audience and an in-house audience that included luminaries Frank Sinatra (as a photographer for *Life* magazine to get a ring-side seat), comedian Woody Allen, singer Diana Ross and actors Dustin Hoffman and Burt Lancaster (who served as "color commentator" with fight announcer Don Dunphy), the two undefeated heavyweights met in a media-frenzied atmosphere reminiscent of Joe Louis' youth.

Several factors came together for Frazier in this fight. He

was 27 years old and at his boxing peak physically and mentally, Ali, 29, was coming back from a three-year absence but had kept active. He had had two good wins, including a bruising battle with Oscar Bonavena, whom Ali had defeated by a TKO in 15 rounds.^[21] Frazier worked on strategy with coach Eddie Futch. They noted Ali's tendency to throw a right-hand uppercut from a straight standing position after dropping the hand in preparation to throw it with force. Futch instructed Frazier to watch Ali's right hand and, at the moment Ali dropped it, to throw a left hook at the spot where they knew Ali's face would be a second later. Frazier staggered Ali in the 11th round and knocked down Ali in the 15th in this way.

In a brutal and competitive contest, Frazier lost the first two rounds but was able to withstand Ali's combinations. Frazier was known to improve in middle rounds, and this was the case with Ali. Frazier came on strong after round three, landing hard shots to the body and powerful left hooks to the head.

Ultimately, Frazier won a 15-round, unanimous decision. Ali was taken to hospital immediately after the fight to check that his severely swollen right side jaw (which was apparent in post-fight interviews) wasn't actually broken. Frazier also spent time in hospital during the ensuing month, the exertions of the fight having been exacerbated by hypertension and a kidney infection.

Later in the year he fought a 3-round exhibition against hard hitting veteran contender Cleveland Williams.

In 1972, Frazier successfully defended the title twice, beating Terry Daniels and Ron Stander, both by knockout, in the fourth and fifth rounds respectively. Daniels had earlier drawn with Jerry Quarry and Stander had knocked out Earnie Shavers.

Loses title to George Foreman

Main article: Joe Frazier vs. George Foreman

Frazier lost his undefeated record of 29–0 and his world championship, at the hands of the unbeaten George Foreman on January 22, 1973, in Kingston, Jamaica. Despite Frazier being the overall favorite, Foreman towered 10 cm (4 inches) over the more compact champion and dominated from the start. Two minutes into the first round, Foreman knocked Frazier down for the first time. After he was knocked down a sixth time in the second round referee Arthur Mercante, Sr. stopped the contest.

Frazier won his next fight, a 12-round decision over Joe Bugner, in London to begin his quest to regain the title.

Mid 1970s-Ali second fight

Frazier's second fight against Ali took place on January 28, 1974, in New York City. In contrast to their previous

meeting, the bout was a non-title fight, with Ali winning a 12-round unanimous decision. The fight was notable for the amount of clinching.

Five months later, Frazier again battled Jerry Quarry in Madison Square Garden, with a strong left hook to the ribs by Frazier ending the fight in the fifth round.

In March 1975, Frazier fought a rematch with Jimmy Ellis in Melbourne, Australia, knocking him out in nine rounds. The win again established Frazier as the number one heavyweight challenger for the title, which Ali had won from George Foreman in the famous "Rumble in the Jungle" five months earlier.

Thrilla In Manila - third Ali fight

Ali and Frazier met for the third and final time in Quezon City (a district within the metropolitan area of Manila), the Philippines, on October 1, 1975: the "Thrilla in Manila." Prior to the fight, Ali took opportunities to mock Frazier by calling him a "gorilla," and generally trying to irritate him.

The fight was a punishing display on both sides under oppressively hot conditions. During the fight, Ali said to Frazier, "They said you were through, Joe." Frazier said, "They lied." After 14 grueling rounds, Futch stopped the fight with Frazier having a closed left eye, an almost-closed right eye and a cut. Ali later said that it was the "closest thing to dying that I know of."^[22] In 1977, Ali told interviewer Reg Gutteridge that he felt this third Frazier fight was his best performance. When Gutteridge suggested his win over Cleveland Williams, Ali said, "No, Frazier's much tougher and rougher than Cleveland Williams"

Foreman again

In 1976, Frazier (32–3) personally wished to retry against George Foreman. With a shaved head for a new image Frazier fought well enough, somewhat more restrained than usual, avoiding walking onto the big shots which he had done in their first match. However, Foreman awaited his moment and then lobbed in one tremendous left hook that lifted Frazier off his feet. After a second knock down it was stopped in the fifth. Shortly after the fight, Frazier announced his retirement.

Frazier made a cameo appearance in the movie *Rocky* later in 1976 and dedicated himself to training local boxers in Philadelphia, where he grew up, including some of his own children. He also helped train Duane Bobick.

Music career

During the late 1970s, Frazier created a soul-funk group called "Joe Frazier and the Knockouts," being mentioned in Billboard and recording a number of singles. Joe



Frazier and his group during the concert in Tilburg, Netherlands.

toured widely all over the USA and Europe including Ireland where among other places he performed in Donegal, Ireland and Athy Co Kildare, Ireland with his band, the Knockouts.

1980s comeback and career as trainer

In 1981, Frazier attempted a comeback. He drew over 10 rounds with hulking Floyd "Jumbo" Cummings in Chicago, Illinois. It was a bruising battle with mixed reviews. He then retired for good.

After that, Frazier involved himself in various endeavors. Among his sons who turned to boxing as a career, he helped train Marvis Frazier, a challenger for Larry Holmes's world heavyweight title and trained his daughter, Jackie Frazier-Lyde, whose most notable fight to date was a close points loss against Laila Ali, the daughter of his rival.

Frazier's overall record was 32 wins, 4 losses and 1 draw, with 27 wins by knockout. He won 73 percent of his fights by knockout, compared to 60 percent for Ali and 84 percent for Foreman. He was a member of the International Boxing Hall Of Fame.

In 1984, Frazier was the special referee for the NWA World Heavyweight Championship match between Ric Flair and Dusty Rhodes at Starrcade '84, awarding the match to Flair due to Rhodes' excessive bleeding.

In 1986, Frazier appeared as the "corner man" for Mr. T against Roddy Piper at Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum as part of WrestleMania 2. In 1989, Frazier joined Ali, Foreman, Norton and Holmes for the tribute special *Champions Forever*.

Media appearances

Frazier appeared as himself in an episode of *The Simpsons* ("Brother, Can You Spare Two Dimes?") in 1992, in which he was supposed to have been beaten up by Barney Gumble in Moe's Tavern. Frazier's son objected and Frazier was instead shown beating up Gumble and

putting him in a trash can. Frazier appeared in another episode of *The Simpsons* ("Homer's Paternity Coot") in 2006. He appeared on-screen in the 8th series of *The Celebrity Apprentice* (USA) television show as a guest-attendee at the Silent Auction event held for the season finale (won by Joan Rivers). Frazier appeared as himself in the Academy Award-winning 1976 movie, *Rocky*. Since the debut of the *Fight Night* series of games, Frazier appeared in *Fight Night 2004*, *Fight Night Round 2*, *Fight Night Round 3*, *Fight Night Round 4* and *Fight Night Champion*, games made by EA Sports.

Books

Frazier released his autobiography in March 1996, entitled *Smokin' Joe: The Autobiography of a Heavyweight Champion of the World, Smokin' Joe Frazier*. Frazier promoted the book shortly before its release with a memorable appearance on *The Howard Stern Show* on January 26, 1996.^[23]

He also wrote *Box Like the Pros*,^[24] "a complete introduction to the sport, including the game's history, rules of the ring, how fights are scored, how to spar, the basics of defence and offence, the fighter's workout, a directory of boxing gyms, and much more. *Box Like the Pros* is an instruction manual, a historical reference tool and an insider's guide to the world's most controversial sport."^[25]

2.19.5 Financial issues and legal battles

According to an article from *The New York Times*, "over the years, Frazier has lost a fortune through a combination of his own generosity and naïveté, his carousing, and failed business opportunities. The other headliners from his fighting days—Ali, George Foreman, and Larry Holmes—are millionaires." Asked about his situation, Frazier became playfully defensive, but would not reveal his financial status. "Are you asking me how much money I have?" he said. "I got plenty of money. I got a stack of \$100 bills rolled up over there in the back of the room." Frazier blamed himself, partly, for not effectively promoting his own image. In a 2006 HBO documentary on the fight in Manila, Frazier was interviewed living in a one room apartment on the second floor of his gym.^[26]

His daughter Jackie Frazier-Lyde is a lawyer and worked on her father's behalf in pursuit of money they claimed he was owed in a Pennsylvania land deal. In 1973, Frazier purchased 140 acres in Bucks County, Pennsylvania for \$843,000. Five years later, a developer agreed to buy the farmland for \$1.8 million. Frazier received annual payments from a trust that bought the land with money he had earned in the ring. However, when the trust went bankrupt, the payments ceased.

Frazier sued his business partners, insisting his signature had been forged on documents and he had no knowledge

of the sale. In the ensuing years, the 140 acres was subdivided and turned into a residential community. The land is now worth an estimated \$100 million.^[27]

2.19.6 Relationship with Muhammad Ali

Frazier and Ali were initially friends. During Ali's enforced three-year lay-off from boxing for refusing to be drafted into the US Army, Frazier lent him money and testified before Congress and petitioned U.S. President Richard Nixon to have Ali's right to box reinstated.^[28] Frazier supported Ali's right not to serve in the army, saying "If Baptists weren't allowed to fight, I wouldn't fight either."^[29]

However, in the build-up to their first fight, *The Fight of the Century*, Ali turned it into a "cultural and political referendum", painting himself as a revolutionary and civil rights champion and Frazier as the white man's hope, an "Uncle Tom" and a pawn of the white establishment.^{[30][31]} Ali successfully turned many black Americans against Frazier. Bryant Gumbel joined the pro-Ali, anti-Frazier bandwagon by writing a major magazine article that asked "Is Joe Frazier a white champion with black skin?" Frazier thought this was "a cynical attempt by Clay to make me feel isolated from my own people. He thought that would weaken me when it came time to face him in that ring. Well, he was wrong. It didn't weaken me, it awakened me to what a cheap-shot son of a bitch he was." He noted the hypocrisy of Ali calling him an Uncle Tom when his [Ali's] trainer (Angelo Dundee) was white.^[30]

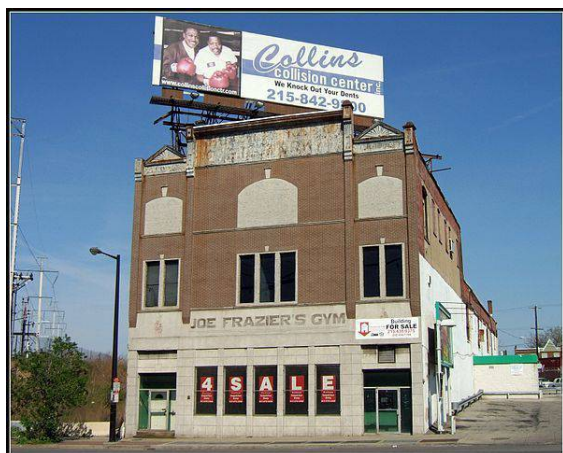
As a result of Ali's campaign, Frazier's children were bullied at school and his family were given police protection after receiving death threats.^[32] Ali declared that if Frazier won he would crawl across the ring and admit that Frazier was the greatest. After Frazier won by a unanimous decision, he called upon Ali to fulfil his promise and crawl across the ring, but he didn't.^[33] Ali called it a "white man's decision" and insisted that he won.^[34]

During a televised joint interview prior to their second bout in 1974, Ali continued to insult Frazier, who took exception to Ali calling him "ignorant" and challenged him to a fight, which resulted in the two of them brawling on the studio floor.^[35] Ali went on to win the 12 round non-title affair by a decision. Ali took things further in the build-up to their last fight, *The Thrilla in Manila*, and called Frazier "the other type of negro" and "ugly", "dumb" and a "gorilla"^[36] At one point he sparred with a man in a gorilla suit and pounded on a rubber gorilla doll, saying "This is Joe Frazier's conscience... I keep it everywhere I go. This is the way he looks when you hit him."^[37] According to the fight's promoter Don King, this enraged Frazier, who took it as a "character assassination" and "personal invective".^[37] One night before the fight, Ali waved around a toy pistol outside Frazier's hotel room. When Frazier came to the balcony, he pointed the

gun at Frazier and yelled “I am going to shoot you.”^[38] After the fight, Ali summoned Frazier’s son Marvis into his dressing room, and told him that he had not meant what he had said about his father. When informed of this by Marvis, Frazier responded: “you ain’t me, son. Why isn’t he apologizing to me?”

For years afterwards, Frazier retained his bitterness towards Ali and suggested that Ali’s battle with Parkinson’s syndrome was a form of divine retribution for his earlier behavior. In 2001, Ali apologized to Frazier via a *New York Times* article, saying “In a way, Joe’s right. I said a lot of things in the heat of the moment that I shouldn’t have said. Called him names I shouldn’t have called him. I apologize for that. I’m sorry. It was all meant to promote the fight.”^[39] Frazier reportedly “embraced it”, though he later retorted that Ali only apologized to a newspaper, not to him. He said: “I’m still waiting [for him] to say it to me.” To this Ali responded: “If you see Frazier, you tell him he’s still a gorilla.”^[40]

Frazier told *Sports Illustrated* in May 2009 that he no longer held hard feelings for Ali.^[41] After Frazier’s death in November 2011, Ali was among those who attended the private funeral services for Frazier in Philadelphia. The Rev. Jesse Jackson, who spoke during the service, asked those in attendance to stand and “show your love” and reportedly Ali stood with the audience and clapped “vigorously”.^[42]



Joe Frazier’s Gym in Philadelphia

2.19.7 Later years

Frazier lived in Philadelphia where he owned and managed a boxing gym. Frazier put the gym up for sale in mid-2009. He was diagnosed with diabetes and high blood pressure. He and his nemesis, Muhammad Ali, alternated over the years between public apologies and public insults.^[44] In 1996, when Ali lit the Olympic flame in Atlanta, Frazier told a reporter that he would like to throw Ali into the fire.^[45] Frazier made millions of dollars in the 1970s, but the article cited mismanagement of real-estate



Frazier was awarded the Order of the Palmetto in Beaufort in 2010.^[43]



The New York Daily News editor-in-chief Kevin Convey (on the right) presented Frazier with the Daily News Front Page Award in 2011.

holdings as a partial explanation for his economic woes. Frazier stated repeatedly that he no longer had any bitter feelings towards Ali. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has named the Joe Frazier’s Gym in its 25th list of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 2012.^{[46][47]} In 2013, the gym was named to the National Register of Historic Places.^[48]

Frazier continued to train young fighters, although he needed multiple operations for back injuries sustained in a car accident. He and Ali reportedly attempted a reconciliation in his final years, but in October 2006 Frazier still claimed to have won all three bouts between the two. He declared to a *Times* reporter, when questioned about his bitterness toward Ali, “I am what I am.”

Frazier attempted to revive his music interests in late 2009/2010. Notably popular for singing 'Mustang Sally,' both Frazier and manager Leslie R. Wolff teamed up with

Welsh Rock Solo artist Jayce Lewis to release his repertoire in the U.K., later visiting the Welshman in U.K. to a host a string of after dinner speeches and music developments. It would notably be Frazier's last U.K. appearance.^{[49][50]}

Death

Frazier was diagnosed with liver cancer in late September 2011. Within a few weeks, the cancer had metastasized. By November 2011, he was under hospice care, where he died on November 7.^{[22][51]} Upon hearing of Frazier's death, Muhammad Ali said, "The world has lost a great champion. I will always remember Joe with respect and admiration."^{[52][53][54]} Frazier's private funeral took place on November 14 at the Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church in Philadelphia and in addition to friends and family was attended by Muhammad Ali, Don King, Larry Holmes, Magic Johnson, Dennis Rodman, among others. He was later buried at the Ivy Hill Cemetery, a short drive from the Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church.^{[55][56]}

2.19.8 In popular media

- He was played by boxer James Toney in the 2001 film, *Ali*.
- He played in "The Fight of the Century" against Ali.
- Some of the most memorable moments in the 1976 boxing-themed feature film, *Rocky*—such as Rocky's carcass-punching scenes and Rocky running up the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, as part of his training regimen—are taken from Frazier's real-life exploits. In the film, Frazier makes a cameo appearance, promoting the fight between Rocky and Apollo.^[57]
- In March 2007, a Joe Frazier action figure was released as part of a range of toys based on the *Rocky* film franchise, developed by the American toy manufacturer, Jakks Pacific.^{[58][59]}
- Electric bassist Jeff Berlin wrote a musical tribute simply called "Joe Frazier," originally recorded on the Bill Bruford album *Gradually Going Tornado*, available on the compilation album *Master Strokes*.
- Mr. Sandman, a video game character in the *Punch-Out!!* video game series known for being one of the toughest opponents, was based in part on Frazier.
- His granddaughter, Latrice Frazier, appeared on an episode of *Maurycy*.

2.19.9 Professional boxing record

2.19.10 See also

- List of heavyweight boxing champions
- List of WBA world champions
- List of WBC world champions
- Notable boxing families

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2.19.13 Further reading

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2.19.14 External links

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- Professional boxing record for Joe Frazier from BoxRec
- “Joe Frazier”. *Olympics at Sports-Reference.com*. Sports Reference LLC.
- Datos y curiosidades sobre Joe Frazier en espanol

2.20 Jimmy Ellis

For other people named Jimmy Ellis, see Jimmy Ellis (disambiguation).

James “Jimmy” Ellis (February 24, 1940 – May 6, 2014) was an American professional boxer. He was a WBA world heavyweight champion, a title he won by defeating Jerry Quarry in 1968. He made one successful title defense against Floyd Patterson, before losing by fifth-round stoppage to Joe Frazier in 1970.

Ellis is also known for his fights with George Chuvalo, Muhammad Ali, Earnie Shavers, Ron Lyle and Joe Bugner. He retired from boxing at the age of 35 in 1975, with a record of 40–12–1 (24 KOs).

He died of dementia complications on May 6, 2014 at the age of 74.

2.20.1 Birth and early years

He was born one of ten children. His father, Walter, was a pastor, and Ellis was brought up as a Christian.^[1] As a teenager Ellis worked in a cement finishing factory.^[2] He also sang in the local church choir, later joined by his wife Mary. He continued church involvement all his adult life. He also admired Joe Louis.^[3]

2.20.2 Amateur career

Ellis got into boxing as a teenager after watching a friend box fellow Louisville youngster Muhammad Ali on a local amateur boxing television show called Tomorrow's Champions. “I had a friend of mine named Donnie Hall, and he fought Ali,” Ellis said. “Donnie lost, and I thought I could maybe be a fighter then.” Ellis went with Hall to Louisville's Columbia Gym, where the coach was a police officer named Joe Martin.^[4]

Ellis won 59 of 66 amateur bouts and was a Golden Gloves champion. He boxed Ali twice as an amateur, with Ali winning the first bout and Ellis winning the second.

2.20.3 Early professional career

Ellis turned professional as a middleweight in 1961. Early in his pro career, he was trained and managed by Bud Bruner. With Bruner, he compiled a record of 15–5 (6 KOs). His five losses were decisions to top Middleweight contenders Holly Mims (whom he defeated in a rematch), Henry Hank, Rubin “Hurricane” Carter, Don Fullmer, and George Benton. This start probably helped his speed of punch, movement and finesse.

At the end of 1964, after losing three out of four fights, Ellis decided to leave Bruner. He later recalled Bruner fondly. “I liked him, and I fought a lot of top-rated fighters when I was with him, but eventually I had to move on,” Ellis said. “He did me justice, and we always remained friends.”^[5]

Ellis wrote a letter to an at first sceptical^[6] Angelo Dundee, the trainer of Ali, and asked him to handle his career. Dundee agreed to be both manager and trainer. Ellis became a sparring partner for Ali and fought on several of his early pre-Liston undercards. Six of his first eight fights with Dundee were on an Ali undercards.^[7]

By the mid 1960s Ellis was fighting heavyweights. Being a tall natural athletic build he'd had increasing trouble keeping down to middleweight. Dr. Ferdie Pacheco, who worked with both Ali & Ellis throughout their careers, called Ellis's development from middleweight to heavyweight one of the most dramatic he could recall.^[8]

2.20.4 WBA world title eliminator matches

By 1966, Ellis was fighting as a heavyweight. When Ali was stripped of the world title for refusing to enter the military, the World Boxing Association staged an eight-man tournament that featured most of the top heavyweight contenders. Ellis, who was ranked eighth in the world after eight consecutive wins, was invited to be in the tournament. Joe Frazier, ranked second by the WBA, chose not to participate in the tournament. Instead, Frazier fought for the vacant New York State Athletic Commission World Heavyweight Championship, which he won with an eleventh-round knockout of Buster Mathis.

In the opening round of the tournament, Ellis fought Leotis Martin on August 5, 1967 in Houston, Texas. Ellis, the betting underdog, battered Martin's face into a bloody mask, and the referee stopped the fight in the ninth round.

Ellis met Oscar Bonavena in the second round of the tour-

nament. The fight took place on December 2, 1967 in **Louisville, Kentucky**. Ellis, once again the underdog, dropped the iron-jawed Bonavena with a right once in the third round and once in the tenth from a truly wicked left hook. After twelve rounds, Ellis was awarded a clear unanimous decision. He controlled the match throughout with perhaps the best display in his career. He made Oscar look basic and was only really in trouble himself in the ninth. But ironically, he turned the ninth around with a split second counter catching Oscar wide open and decking him badly. Ellis advanced to the tournament final.^[9]

2.20.5 Wins WBA world title

In the tournament final, Ellis faced **Jerry Quarry**, a slight betting favorite, on April 27, 1968 in **Oakland, California**.^[10] In a dull fight, Ellis fought what *Sports Illustrated* called “a tactical masterpiece”. But he was very cautious and won a fifteen-round split decision^[11] to capture the vacant WBA Heavyweight Championship. Quarry said, “If they'd given me the decision, I'd have given it back. I didn't deserve it.”^{[12][13]}

2.20.6 Title reign

In his only successful title defense, Ellis defeated **Floyd Patterson** by a controversial fifteen-round decision on September 14, 1968 in **Stockholm, Sweden**. Ellis, who suffered a broken nose in the second round, was awarded the decision by the referee, the sole judge. Many in the crowd of 30,000 disagreed with the decision and started chanting, “Floyd champ!” The *New York Times* scored the fight seven rounds to six for Ellis, with two even.^[14]

Following the defeat of Patterson, Ellis was out of the ring for seventeen months. He was going to fight **Henry Cooper** in the United Kingdom, even though the British Boxing Board of Control refused to recognize the fight as a world title bout: the BBBofC was affiliated with the **World Boxing Council**, who stated that they would only recognize a fight between **Joe Frazier** and a suitable contender as being for the world title. The fight was postponed a couple of times and eventually cancelled because Cooper injured his knee.^[15] Ellis then planned to fight **Bob Cleroux** in **Montreal**, but Cleroux lost what was supposed to be a tune-up fight against the lightly regarded **Billy Joiner**. Finally, Ellis was going to fight **Gregorio Peralta** in **Argentina**, but promoters canceled the fight 24 hours before it was to take place because of poor ticket sales.^{[16][17]}

2.20.7 Unification title match with Joe Frazier

On February 16, 1970, Ellis fought **Joe Frazier** to unify the World Heavyweight Championship at **Madison**

Square Garden in **New York City**. The undefeated **Frazier**, a heavy betting favorite, proved to be too strong and powerful. Ellis, who had never been floored as a heavy-weight, was knocked down twice in the fourth round by a relentless **Frazier**, and **Angelo Dundee** stopped the fight before the start of the fifth round. It was the first knock-out loss for Ellis.

2.20.8 Fighting Ali

After winning his next three fights, Ellis fought **Muhammad Ali** in the **Houston Astrodome** on July 26, 1971. **Angelo Dundee** chose to work with Ellis for the fight. He was Ali's trainer, but he was both manager and trainer for Ellis. Working with Ellis meant that he would get a bigger share of the purse. Ali understood completely and got **Harry Wiley**, who had worked with **Henry Armstrong** and **Sugar Ray Robinson**, to be his trainer for the Ellis fight. It was one of the few fights in Ali's career in which **Dundee** was not in his corner.^[18]

Ellis fought well over the first three rounds, but the fight turned after Ellis was hurt by a right hand in the fourth round. The right hand “hurt me so bad I couldn't really fight my best after that,” Ellis said. “It ruined me.” The referee stopped the fight in the twelfth round as Ellis remained on his feet. No knockdowns were recorded throughout the fight.^[19]

2.20.9 Diminishing skills

After the loss to Ali, Ellis won his next eight fights by knockout. But on June 18, 1973, he fought **Earnie Shavers**, who was 44–2 (43 KOs), at **Madison Square Garden**. Ellis, ranked fourth by the WBA, stunned **Shavers** with a chopping right to the jaw and backed him into a corner. **Shavers** took numerous shots in the corner before clinching. After the referee separated the fighters, **Shavers** put Ellis down for the count with a wickedly powerful single right uppercut to the chin. The time was 2:39 in the first round. It was a stunning win for **Shavers**.^[20]

Ellis came back with a knockout win against club fighter **Memphis Al Jones**, but with his skills in decline, he went winless in his next five fights. He lost a split decision to **Boone Kirkman**, fought a draw with **Larry Middleton**, dropped decisions to **Ron Lyle** and **Joe Bugner**, and was stopped in nine rounds in a rematch with **Joe Frazier**.

The rematch with **Joe Frazier** took place in **Melbourne, Australia**, on March 2, 1975. Ellis trained at the **Golden Bowl Gym** in **Camberwell, Melbourne** with martial arts 4th Dan **Gerry Scaife**. Ellis won the first three rounds, but **Frazier** then picked up the intensity and took control. With Ellis bloody and battered, **Angelo Dundee** signaled for referee **Bob Foster** to stop the fight in the ninth round.

2.20.10 Retirement

On May 6, 1975, in what would be his last fight, Ellis knocked out club fighter Carl Baker in the first round. He retired aged 35 after suffering a training injury that left him partially blind in his left eye. Ellis finished with a record of 40–12–1 (24 KOs).

After retiring from boxing, Ellis trained boxers. Later he worked for the Louisville Parks Department on athletic and recreational projects between 1989 and 2003.^[21]

2.20.11 Life outside boxing

In 2004 Ellis told the *Washington Times* "...All I ever wanted to be was a good fighter and good man."^[22] He seemed to achieve it. Brother Jeff gave a tribute on his death saying "He was someone you could model yourself on"^[23] Ellis was a reserved family man who shunned flash although had a determined competitive streak in boxing.

With wife Mary he had six children, 2 sons and 4 daughters. His brother Charles boxed in the 1964 Olympics. Ellis was personally kind and gracious. He maintained a brotherly relationship with Ali over all the decades. Ali himself often recalled Ellis as a great friend. Ellis wasn't always pleased by the sparring partner tag but felt he had proved himself above that.^[24]

He suffered from dementia pugilistica, for over decade before his death.^[25] It was reported that Ellis' condition was so bad that he believed his deceased wife, Mary who died in 2006, was still alive.^{[26][27]}

2.20.12 Death

Ellis died of complications from dementia on May 6, 2014, in Louisville, Baptist Hospital, Kentucky.^[28]

A tribute came in from Muhammad Ali; 'In the world of heavyweights I always thought him one of the best'.^[29] Ellis's family considered that boxing exacerbated the dementia, but had not necessarily caused it.^[30] His younger brother Jeff, who'd trained with Ellis in years past, commented that he himself now avoided watching boxing as he'd seen too many damaged by it.^[31] Ellis was survived by three brothers and a sister.^[32] Son Jeff played professional football and confirmed the family were always immensely proud of Ellis's achievements and world title.^[33]

2.20.13 Legacy

Ellis will be remembered as a top boxer and part title holder who battled both Frazier and Ali. Notwithstanding his contests with Quarry, Patterson and Bonavena however. It was perhaps boxing's peak era and he was a crucial major figure.

2.20.14 Professional boxing record

2.20.15 See also

- List of people from the Louisville metropolitan area

2.20.16 References

- [1] Courier Journal
- [2] New York Times
- [3] New York times, 6 May 2014
- [4] *The Washington Times* – July 31, 2004
- [5] *The Courier-Journal* – February 23, 1996
- [6] New York times 6 may 2014
- [7] *Sports Illustrated* – December 11, 1967
- [8] Ferdie's book *Fight Doctor*
- [9] Boxing history by Sam Andre, Hamlyn publisher. Fight films
- [10] Boxing history by Sam Andre, Hamlyn, & also fight videos
- [11] Sam Andre's Pictorial History of Boxing
- [12] "Forty Years Ago: WBA Launches Heavyweight Tourney"
- [13] *Sports Illustrated* – May 6, 1968
- [14] *The New York Times* – September 15, 1968
- [15] *Washington Afro-American* – September 30, 1969
- [16] *The Montreal Gazette* – July 22, 1971
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- [18] Muhammad Ali vs. Jimmy Ellis: The Inevitable Fight – 40 Years On
- [19] *Sports Illustrated* – August 2, 1971
- [20] *The Montreal Gazette* – June 19, 1973
- [21] *New York Times*, 6 May 2014
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- [23] Wiky sports, May 2014
- [24] *New York Times* 6 May 2014
- [25] Bloomberg News, May 2014
- [26] "Jimmy Ellis: From Ali Sparring Partner To Heavyweight Champion"
- [27] "The Sweet Science: Boxing And Getting One's Head Examined"

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- [29] *New York Times* 6 May 2014
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- [32] *Courier Journal*, May 2014
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- [34] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=016178&cat=boxer

2.20.17 External links

- Professional boxing record for Jimmy Ellis from BoxRec
- Jimmy Ellis at the Internet Movie Database

2.21 Buster Mathis

Buster Mathis (June 11, 1943 – September 6, 1995) was a boxer who had a very successful career as an amateur heavyweight boxer. He qualified for a spot in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. However, he was injured and was unable to compete there. Instead of him, the fighter Mathis beat in the Olympic Trials went to the Olympics. This fighter was the legendary Joe Frazier, who went on to win the gold medal.

Mathis was an impressive hulking figure who often fought at around 245lbs. He was surprisingly agile, with good boxing skill and respected power. His combination punches were fast and accurate too.

2.21.1 Professional career

Mathis turned professional in June 1965 with a second round knockout victory over Bob Maynard. Buster Mathis went on to win his next 22 contests as well and qualified for a shot at the New York State Athletic Commission World Heavyweight Title, which had become vacant after Muhammad Ali was stripped of the title for refusing to be drafted into the United States army.

The Title fight was to be held March 4, 1968 in New York's Madison Square Garden against 'smoking' Joe Frazier, his old rival. Both boxers were unbeaten as professionals, so tension was high. Ring magazine noted that Mathis had built up useful experience on a range of mostly competent but non ranked opponents, whilst Frazier had been thrown in the deep end early and by now had battled several top names. This may have had a telling outcome in the contest.

Mathis made a promising start in the fight. He was ahead at midpoint, but the gap narrowed a lot with the sheer pressure from a determined Frazier in the later rounds. The end came suddenly when a single short thudding left hook landed as Mathis advanced. It won the fight by 11th round knockout for Frazier.

Buster Mathis continued to fight in the following years, outpointing highly regarded ironman George Chuvalo, but losing on points to Jerry Quarry - a fight Mathis was favoured to win. Mathis retired after losing to Quarry in 1969, but returned in 1971 to box Muhammad Ali for the NABF belt, losing on points over 12 rounds. Ali was later criticized for not finishing Mathis in the final rounds of the fight.^[1]

After Mathis was knocked out in just three rounds in August 1972 by fast-rising puncher Ron Lyle, he decided to retire for good from boxing.

2.21.2 Retirement

Mathis suffered from various health problems in later years, such as diabetes and kidney problems. A 1980 Sports Illustrated article featured interviews with Mathis and many of Muhammad Ali's other opponents. It reported Mathis worked in the trucking business after he retired from the ring. The former pugilist later suffered a heart attack and two strokes. His compulsive eating had ballooned his weight to 550 pounds and, in 1995, he died of a heart attack at age of 52. A Ring magazine tribute noted he was really an easy going guy and perhaps too nice for the boxing game.

He won 30 fights (21 by KO) and lost 4 with his only professional losses coming against Joe Frazier, Jerry Quarry, Muhammad Ali and Ron Lyle.

2.21.3 Professional boxing record

2.21.4 Personal life

His son Buster Mathis Jr. was to later become a successful fighter, and was to take on Mike Tyson in 1995. His son Cole, was born in China in 1992, in Shanghai.

2.21.5 Notes

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2.21.6 External links

- Professional boxing record for Buster Mathis from BoxRec

2.22 Jürgen Blin

Jürgen Blin (born 7 April 1943) was a German boxer. He is best known for fighting Muhammad Ali on 26 December 1971, being knocked out in the seventh round.

Born in Fehmarn and residing in Hamburg, he represented West Germany. Blin's record in the ring was 30-12-6 with eight knockouts.^[1] He was greatly admired by German boxing fans for his toughness and stamina in the ring. He was briefly heavyweight champion of Germany after beating Gerhard Zech (he had two draws with him previously).

His first professional bout came against Klaus Krüger in October 1964. Blin won this bout, as well as the next five bouts against domestic opponents, and lost his first professional bout in June 1965 to Ray Patterson in Jordal Amfi.^[1]

Blin lost a decision to Joe Bugner in May 1971 when fighting for the European heavyweight title. Blin later won the title in June 1972, his greatest triumph in the ring, when he beat Jose Urtain (who had beaten Blin for the same title in June 1970). However, in October 1972, Blin once again faced Bugner who retained the title by knocking the German in the eighth round.^[1]

The bout against Muhammad Ali happened on 26 December 1971 in Hallenstadion Arena, Zürich. Blin was knocked out 2 minutes and 12 seconds into the seventh round.^[1] In 2002, Blin collaborated with author Stephen Brunt on a book called *Facing Ali*. He said that fighting Ali was the greatest honour of his life.

2.22.1 Professional boxing record

2.22.2 References

[1] Jürgen Blin record at boxrec.com

[2] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=9387&cat=boxer

2.23 Mac Foster

Not to be confused with Marc Forster.

MacArthur "Mac" Foster (June 27, 1942 – July 19, 2010) was an American heavyweight professional boxer. Foster was known as one of the hardest punchers of his era, and it's said that he once knocked out the powerful and feared Sonny Liston during a sparring session. In his professional boxing career, he scored notable wins over top fighters such as Thad Spencer, Cleveland Williams and Zora Folley.

2.23.1 Early life

The son of Mississippi sharecroppers, Foster was a 6' 2" United States Marine Corps Vietnam War veteran.^[1] Born in Alexandria, Virginia^[2] he grew up in Fresno, California, the third of eleven children. His father was a nurse. Foster picked grapes and cotton as a youth. Fresno State University offered Foster a track and field scholarship out of Washington High School, but he volunteered for the United States Marines instead. In the service, Foster won fourteen amateur boxing titles. After a military discharge, Foster turned pro, becoming the third Fresno boxer of note (Young Corbett III was a world welterweight champion and Wayne Thornton rose through the rankings to become a number one heavyweight contender in 1970. Foster trained with Pat DiFuria at the Merced Street Gym.^[1]

2.23.2 Boxing career

Known as Big Mac 'The Knife' from Fresno, Foster made his professional debut in 1966, winning his first 24 fights by knockout, and was named *Ring Magazine* progress of the year for 1969. As Britain's Boxing Illustrated magazine put it 'He could certainly whack!'

Whilst serving as a sparring partner for Sonny Liston, Foster reportedly knocked out the former world champion.^[3]

By 1970, Foster was ranked as the world's number one heavyweight contender and seemed set for a title shot, but his 24-0 winning streak came to an end when as favourite he was stopped in six rounds by the more experienced Jerry Quarry in June 1970. After the Quarry fight, Foster knocked out ageing but well rated Zora Folley in one round.

In April 1972 Foster faced Muhammad Ali in Tokyo. Although he scuppered Ali's prediction of a fifth round stoppage by lasting the distance, Foster lost a clear decision to the former champion. But Foster was cheered for his spirited attempt.

Foster followed up his loss to Ali with knockouts of journeymen Sam McGill and Charles Williams. He was then outpointed by Bob Stallings, Joe Bugner and Henry Clark in consecutive bouts.

Foster served as George Foreman's sparring partner for Foreman's world title bout with Ken Norton in 1974. He retired from boxing in 1976 after losing his fourth consecutive decision, this time to prospect Stan Ward. Foster's final record was 30-6, with all 30 of his wins coming by knockout.

2.23.3 After retirement

After retiring, Foster volunteered his time as boxing coach for youth.^[1]

2.23.4 Death

Foster died of MRSA on Monday, July 19, 2010. He was 68. Foster was survived by his wife Yolanda and their four children, Gregory, Joshua, Nathaniel and Nicole. He was buried at the San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery in Santa Nella, California.^[4]

2.23.5 Professional boxing record

2.23.6 References

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- [2] "Professional boxing record for Mac Foster". BoxRec. Retrieved April 7, 2008.
- [3] <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=R2AOAAAIBAJ&sjid=POsFAAAAIBAJ&pg=5755,2105803&dq>
- [4] Mac "The Knife" Foster at *Find a Grave*
- [5] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=9388&cat=boxer

2.23.7 External links

- Professional boxing record for Mac Foster from BoxRec

2.24 Alvin Lewis

Alvin Lewis, also known as **Al Lewis**, (born 1943 in Detroit, Michigan, United States) is a professional boxer who fought in the heavyweight division under the alias "*Al "Blue" Lewis*". Lewis was a long-term sparring partner of Muhammad Ali and is mentioned in Ali's autobiography. He was a well-known powerful gym adversary. He also sparred with, among others, George Foreman for the Champ's then upcoming match with Ken Norton.

2.24.1 Professional career

After a troubled youth background, Lewis turned professional in June 1966 in Canton, Ohio, United States. In his debut Lewis faced "*Clown Prince*" Art Miller. Lewis won this fight with a 1st round knockout.^[1]

2.24.2 Other matches

He accrued 15 wins from his debut. But then Bob Stallings stopped him in seven in 1967. But Lewis won their rematch a year later by a 2nd round knock out.

Lewis also fought **Leotis Martin** twice a while later, losing the first by KO in 9 and the direct rematch by decision. Lewis outpointed fringe contender **Dick Wipperman** in 1967.

He fought an ageing **Cleveland Williams** whom he stopped in four in 1970, Oscar Bonavena against whom he lost by disqualification after decking Oscar several times in 1971 and **Jack O'Halloran**, against whom he lost on points in 1973.^[1]

2.24.3 The Ali fight

He is best remembered for a non-title fight with **Muhammad Ali** which took place at Croke Park in Dublin, Ireland on July 19, 1972, which he lost by an 11th round TKO.^[1] Lewis was outclassed. Down in the 5th it looked like the end. But he rallied onwards. He then surprised many by launching offensives just when it wasn't expected, typically after an Ali burst. The Lewis-Ali event is described in the documentary film, *When Ali Came to Ireland*.

2.24.4 Retirement

He last fought in November 1973. His retirement then came suddenly and unexpected. A Ring Magazine article detailed he'd stopped to help a Priest with a broken down car. In looking in the engine bay the battery sparked spitting acid in one eye which meant his licence was revoked. Lewis's final record was 30W(19Ko's)–6L-0D.

2.24.5 Professional boxing record

2.24.6 References

- [1] Boxrec. "Alvin Lewis". *Boxrec Fighter Page*. Retrieved January 5, 2009.
- [2] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=9389&cat=boxer

2.24.7 External links

- Professional boxing record for Alvin Lewis from BoxRec
- Brief biography
- Article on Lewis
- Video of the Ali–Lewis fight on YouTube
- Footage of Rounds 8, 9 & 10 of the fight with Ali on YouTube

- Round by round newspaper account of Lewis vs Ali from New York's Irish Arts Center's *Fighting Irishmen, A Celebration of the Celtic Warrior*
- The Week Ali Charmed Ireland

2.25 Bob Foster

Robert Lloyd Foster (December 15, 1938 – November 21, 2015) was an American professional boxer who fought as a light heavyweight and heavyweight. Known as “The Deputy Sheriff”, Foster was one of the greatest light heavyweight champions in boxing history. He won the undisputed light heavyweight title from **Dick Tiger** in 1968 via fourth round knockout, and went on to defend his crown fourteen times in total from 1968 to 1974. Foster challenged heavyweight kings **Joe Frazier** and **Muhammad Ali** during his career, but was knocked out by both fighters (the fight with Ali was not for a world heavyweight title, but for the regional NABF version).

Foster retired from professional boxing in 1978, at the age of 40.

2.25.1 Early years

Foster started his professional career on the night of March 27, 1961, against **Duke Williams**, in Washington, D.C., winning by knockout in two rounds. The first 12 bouts of his career were spent campaigning in the United States' Eastern coast and in Canada. In his tenth bout, he made his first of multiple forays into the Heavyweight division, and suffered his first loss, at the hands of **Doug Jones** by a knockout in the eighth round.

After two more wins, he went in 1963 to Peru, where he lost to South American champion **Mauro Mina** by a decision in ten rounds at Lima.

Three more fights back in the States resulted in quick knockout wins for him, and then, in 1964, he made his second attempt at entering the heavyweight rankings, being knocked out in the seventh by future world Heavyweight champion **Ernie Terrell**. He finished the year by posting three more knockout wins at Light Heavyweight, two of them in the month of November. The night of November 11 was Foster's first fight of note as a light-heavyweight. One month after knocking out **Don Quinn** in the first round, he stepped up in the ring again and faced former world title challenger **Henry Hank**. He beat Hank by a knockout in the tenth.

In 1965, he had five fights, winning four and losing one. He beat Hank again, by decision in 12, and lost to **Zora Folley**, by a decision in ten, in another attempt at joining the Heavyweight top ten.

In 1966 he defeated **Leroy Green** in two rounds.

By 1967, Foster, although his attempts to become a top

Heavyweight were being frustrated, was a ranked light-heavyweight. He decided to stick to the light-heavyweight division for the time being, and he won all seven of his fights, six by knockout. Among the fighters he beat were **Eddie Cotton**, **Eddie Vick**, and **Sonny Moore**. After defeating Moore, Foster was the world's number one ranked Light Heavyweight challenger.

2.25.2 World light-heavyweight champion

In 1968, Foster got his first shot at a world title. At **Madison Square Garden** in **New York**, on the night of March 24, Foster became world champion by knocking out **Dick Tiger** in four rounds. Tiger had been a two-time world middleweight champion and was defending his world light-heavyweight crown that night. Foster then decided to box at heavyweight once again, and beat future **George Foreman** victim **Charlie Polite** by a knockout in three. He ended that year defeating Vick again, and his future world title challenger **Roger Rouse**, both by a knockout.

In 1969, he began by rising off the canvas to knock out **Frank De Paula** in the same first round and retain his belt. It is believed that was the first time ever a boxer won a world title fight in the first round after being floored in that same round. It is also believed that that fight is one of only three times that's happened... the second time being in 1984, when **Juan Meza** rose off a knockdown to dethrone world Jr. Featherweight champion **Jaime Garza** in the same first round too. It also happened in the 21st century, when **Kendall Holt** was dropped twice, only to knockout **Ricardo Torres** in round 1, for the WBO 140 lb title.

Foster's next fight in 1969 was against **Andy Kendall**, whom he beat in four rounds by knockout, to once again retain the crown. He closed the 1960s with two more knockout wins.

2.25.3 Frazier vs Foster

In 1970, Foster made two more trips to the heavyweights. In the first, he beat fringe contender **Lee Wallace** in six rounds by knockout. This was followed by a return to the light-heavyweight division to defend his title against **Rouse**. Infuriated by some comments that **Rouse's** manager had made before the bout concerning the fact that even though Foster knocked out **Rouse** in their first bout he was not able to drop him, Foster dropped **Rouse** five times en route to a fourth round knockout victory. A knockout in 10 to retain the title against **Mark Tessman** followed, and then he was given the chance to challenge for the world heavyweight title. Facing world champion **Joe Frazier** on the night of November 18 in **Detroit**, he was knocked out in two rounds.

After defeating **Hal Carroll** by a knockout in four rounds

to defend his crown, the **WBA** stripped him of the title, but he remained as world champion on the **WBC**. Foster became enraged at the WBA, which proceeded to have **Vicente Rondon** of **Venezuela** and **Jimmy Dupree** fight for the world title. Rondon won, becoming the second **Latin American** world light-heavyweight champion (after **José Torres**), and Foster set his eyes on him. Foster went on defending his WBC title, and he defeated challengers **Ray Anderson**, **Tommy Hicks**, and **Brian Kelly**. Of those three, it was Anderson who was the only one to last the 15 round distance with Foster.

2.25.4 Ali vs Foster

Foster and Rondon met in **Miami** on April 7, 1972, in a unification bout. Foster became the undisputed world champion once again, by knocking Rondon out in the second round. In his next fight, he used what many critics have called one of the best punches in history to retain his title by a knockout in four against **Mike Quarry**. Foster then went up in weight and faced former and future world heavyweight champion **Muhammad Ali**, in what was legendary referee **Mills Lane**'s first bout of note as a referee. Foster lost to Ali by a knockout in the eighth, after being knocked down 7 times.

In 1973, Foster retained his title twice against **Pierre Fourie**, both by decision. Their second fight had a distinct social impact because it was fought in **Apartheid**-ruled **South Africa**, Foster being Black and Fourie being White. Foster became a hero to South African Blacks by beating Fourie the first time around, and in their rematch, the first boxing fight in South Africa after Apartheid featuring a White versus a Black, he cemented that position by defeating Fourie on points again. However, as **Mark Mathabane** noted in his autobiography *Kaffir Boy*, South Africa's black population also felt betrayed by Foster since he didn't address Apartheid during his time in South Africa.

2.25.5 Retirement and comeback

His last defense as world light-heavyweight champion came in 1974, when he was dropped by **Argentinian** **Jorge Ahumada**, but managed to keep the title with a draw. After that, he announced his retirement, leaving the world's light-heavyweight championship vacant.^[2]

Foster would return to the ring in 1975, winning a series of 10 round contests, before retiring for good.

In his retirement, the former world champion joined the **Bernalillo County Sheriff's Department** and became a detective, where he would become a well known officer in the **Albuquerque** area.^[3]

He married four times and became a widower in 1984.

He was inducted into the **International Boxing Hall of Fame** at **Canastota, New York**, in 1990.

Foster had a record of 56 wins, 8 losses and 1 draw, with 46 wins coming by knockout. He was named to **Ring Magazine's** list of 100 Greatest Punchers. He was also named to **Ring Magazine's** list of the 80 Best Fighters of the Last 80 Years, ranking at #55.

Foster died on November 21, 2015 at a hospital in **Albuquerque, New Mexico** at the age of 76.^[3]

2.25.6 Professional boxing record

2.25.7 See also

- **List of WBC world champions**

2.25.8 References

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- [2] "Foster Keeps Title on Draw". **St. Petersburg Times**. 1974-06-18. Retrieved 2010-01-13.
- [3] **Goldsmith, Alex** (2015-11-21) **Champion boxer, BCSO deputy Bob Foster dead at 77**. **krqe.com**

2.25.9 External links

- **Professional boxing record for Bob Foster** from **BoxRec**
- **New Mexico Boxing, the Bob Foster story**
- **<http://www.bobfosterboxing.net>**

2.26 Joe Bugner

József Kreul “Joe” Bugner (born 13 March 1950) is a Hungarian-born British-Australian former heavyweight boxer and actor. He holds triple nationality, being a citizen of Hungary and a naturalized citizen of both Australia and the United Kingdom. As an actor he is best known for his role in the 1994 action film *Street Fighter*, alongside **Jean-Claude Van Damme** and **Raul Julia**.

Born in **Szõreg**, a southeastern suburb of **Szeged** in southern Hungary, Bugner and his family fled after the 1956 Soviet invasion and settled in England. Standing at 6 ft 4 in (1.93 m) with a prime weight of around 220 pounds (100 kg),^[1] Bugner twice held the **British** and **British Commonwealth** heavyweight titles and was a three-time **European** heavyweight champion. He was ranked among the world's top ten heavyweights in the 1970s, fighting such opponents as **Muhammad Ali**, **Joe Frazier**, **Ron Lyle**, **Jimmy Ellis**, **Manuel Ramos**, **Chuck Wepner**, **Earnie Shavers**, **Henry Cooper**, **Brian London**, **Mac Foster**, **Rudie Lubbers**, **Eduardo Corletti**, **Jurgen**

Blin and George Johnson. He fought for the world heavy-weight championship in 1975, losing on points in a second bout with Ali.

Bugner retired from boxing in 1976, but over the next two decades he made sporadic comebacks with varying success. He relocated to Australia in 1986, adopting the nickname “Aussie Joe”, beating fighters such as Greg Page, David Bey, Anders Eklund and James Tillis before retiring again after a TKO loss to Frank Bruno in 1987. He made a final comeback during the 1990s, winning the Australian heavyweight title in 1995 and the lightly-regarded World Boxing Federation (WBF) heavyweight championship in 1998 at the age of 48. He retired for the last time in 1999 with a final record of 69-13-1, including 43 wins by knockout.

2.26.1 Early years

Joe and his family fled to the United Kingdom in the late 1950s because of the Soviet Union’s invasion of Hungary in 1956 after the Hungarian Uprising of that year.^[2] They settled in the Cambridgeshire town of St Ives in the Fens, and so, as local custom dictated, he was known as a Fen Tiger. At school Bugner excelled in sports and was the national junior discus champion in 1964.^[3] He lived and trained in Bedford during his early boxing years; he was a regular at Bedford Boys Club under the training of Paul King^[4] and attended Goldington Road School in Bedford.

2.26.2 Boxing career

1960s

Bugner had a short amateur career, fighting sixteen times and winning thirteen bouts. He turned professional in 1967 (at the unusually young age of seventeen) on the advice of his then trainer and friend Andy Smith. Smith was unhappy with the choice of Bugner’s opponents and believed that he could better control the quality of his opponents if Bugner turned professional.^[5] He had a losing debut against Paul Brown on 20 December 1967 at the London Hilton, where he suffered a TKO in the third round. Showing gritty determination, after his debut the teenage Bugner went on to win a remarkable 18 consecutive fights in under two years during 1968 and 1969 (including 13 stoppage victories) before narrowly losing to the older and vastly more experienced Dick Hall.^[6] He bounced back and rounded off the 1960s with three further stoppage victories.

1970s

In 1970 Bugner emerged internationally as an outstanding young prospect, and by the end of the year he was world-rated. He won nine consecutive bouts that year, including victories over well-known boxers such as Chuck Wepner,

Manuel Ramos, Johnny Prescott, Brian London, Ray Patterson, Eduardo Corletti, Miguel Angel Paez and George Johnson.

Bugner was now positioned to challenge world-rated Englishman Henry Cooper, who had nearly knocked out Muhammad Ali a few years previously, for Cooper’s British, British Commonwealth and European titles. However, because Bugner was still too young to fight for the British Commonwealth title (the minimum age was twenty-one years old at the time), this much anticipated bout had to be postponed until the next year. While waiting to come of age, in 1971 he defeated Carl Gizzi and just weeks later and weeks before facing Cooper, drew with Bill Drover.

Early in his professional years Bugner earned a reputation as a tough, durable but often exceptionally defensive and cautious boxer; he retained that image for the rest of his career. He was criticized often for lacking natural aggression in the ring. Some observers argued that Bugner’s heart was never in boxing after an early opponent, Ulric Regis, died from brain injuries soon after being outpointed by Bugner at London’s Shoreditch Town Hall.

Defeat of Henry Cooper In March 1971 Bugner finally met veteran Cooper, and won a fifteen-round decision. Bugner won the bout by the slimmest of margins, 1/4 point, on the card of the lone official, Harry Gibbs. The British sporting public and press were deeply divided about the verdict. Many felt that Cooper deserved the decision due to his steady aggression. But Bugner fought effectively on the defense and scored often with his left jab, and in the opinion of many, was the rightful winner of the bout. *The Times*, among others, scored the fight in favour of Bugner. Still, the outcome of the bout is regarded as one of the most controversial in British boxing history.

Nonetheless, Bugner was now the British, British Commonwealth, and European champion, and for the first time he was ranked among the world’s top ten heavyweights. Bugner would remain in the world ratings for most of the rest of the decade.

Bugner retained his European title with a decision over tough German heavyweight Jürgen Blin.

However, later in 1971 Bugner lost decisions to underdogs Jack Bodell and Larry Middleton; sandwiched between these losses was a victory over Mike Boswell. The Bodell fight was particularly costly, depriving Bugner of his British, British Commonwealth and European championships. Bugner’s relative inexperience, his youth and lack of an extensive amateur background, (and possibly the lingering controversy surrounding the Cooper fight), were the chief causes of these defeats.

In 1972 Bugner won eight consecutive fights, including a knockout over Jürgen Blin for the European championship, an impressive knockout against the tough Tony

Doyle (who had beaten **Thad Spencer** and Terry Daniels, and had taken **Jerry Quarry** the distance) and had further KO's over the then-unbeaten Doug Kirk and the useful Italian Dante Cane. By the end of that year, Bugner had acquired sufficient seasoning as a boxer, that his manager began seeking matches against the world's best heavy-weights.

Prime years In 1973 Bugner began the year by retaining his European belt with a victory over the capable Dutchman **Rudie Lubbers**. The 23-year-old Bugner then lost twelve-round decisions to **Muhammad Ali** and **Joe Frazier**. Although the scorecards in the Ali fight were somewhat lopsided, Bugner fought well, and he won the respect of the boxing media and public alike. After their bout, Ali declared that Bugner was capable of being world champion.^[7] Ali's trainer **Angelo Dundee** later echoed that sentiment.^[8] The fight with Frazier in July 1973 at Earls Court in London was deemed a classic. After being knocked down by a tremendous left hook in the tenth round, Bugner arose and staggered Frazier to close the round. Frazier took the decision, but only narrowly, and arguably only **George Foreman** and **Muhammad Ali** ever gave Frazier a harder fight. Many regard the Frazier bout as being Bugner's best career performance.

After the Ali and Frazier fights, Bugner won a further 8 bouts in a row, his most notable victories being over top contender and ex-WBA World Heavyweight Champion **Jimmy Ellis**, the highly rated **Mac Foster**, **Pat Duncan** and European title defences against **Giuseppe Ros**, **Dante Cane** and **Mario Baruzzi**. By the end of 1974 Bugner was rated among the top five heavyweight contenders in the world.

Bugner challenged **Muhammad Ali** for the world championship in June 1975, the bout being held in **Kuala Lumpur**, with Ali winning a relatively one-sided fifteen-round decision. Bugner performed fairly well, but maintained a strictly defensive posture throughout most of this fight, perhaps due to the blistering tropical heat, and as a result he was widely scorned by the media and public. In an interview during an April 2008 reunion with Henry Cooper, Bugner defended his tactics in the Ali fight as having been necessary due to the extreme temperature and humidity of the outside venue.

Regains British, European & Commonwealth titles

Early in 1976, Bugner announced his retirement from boxing, stating that he no longer felt motivated to fight professionally. Within months however he returned to the ring, expressing disgust at Richard Dunn's performance against Ali and in October he blasted out Richard Dunn in the first round to reclaim the British, British Commonwealth, and European championships. Onlookers state that they had never seen Bugner angry before, and that while Dunn's supporters had waged a quite unsportsman-like campaign against Bugner, if he had fought like that

in his earlier career he could have gone further.

In 1977, Bugner lost a close twelve-round decision away from home to top contender **Ron Lyle**. The scores were 57-53 and 56-54 for Lyle against 55-54 for Bugner. After this bout, Bugner again retired, making only sporadic comebacks to the ring over the next decades.

1980s

Bugner returned to the ring for brief periods in the 1980s and 1990s, but due to the effects of age and inactivity, he was never again as effective as he had been during his prime.

After a three-year absence from the ring, Bugner returned in May 1980, knocking out fringe contender **Gilberto Acuna**, before promptly retiring again. In 1982, a ring rusty Bugner (having had only one short fight in 5 years and weighing in some 25 lbs above his prime fighting weight) fought the hard-hitting top contender **Earnie Shavers**, but was stopped in the second round due to a badly cut eye. However, Bugner decided to continue his comeback, stopping the useful **John Dino Denis** and fringe contender **Danny Sutton**, as well as domestic contenders **Winston Allen** and **Eddie Neilson**. In 1983, a subdued and unmotivated Bugner lost to **Marvis Frazier**, showing little ambition throughout the bout. He followed this with a decision over future European champion **Anders Eklund** and a controversial loss to future World Title challenger **Steffen Tangstad**. Bugner appeared to have done enough to win this fight, however, like with the Frazier and Eklund bouts, he appeared unmotivated and uninterested throughout.

Comeback in Australia In 1986 he moved to **Australia**, where he adopted the nickname *Aussie Joe* after taking out dual British-Australian nationality.^[9] In Australia, Bugner launched a fairly successful comeback, earning good victories over world title contenders **James Tillis** and **David Bey** and an impressive victory over former WBA heavyweight champion **Greg Page**, gaining a world ranking in the process, after which he spoke of challenging reigning heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson**.^[10] However, there was great clamour for a fight with fellow Briton **Frank Bruno**. The bout was touted as the biggest all-British heavyweight bout since **Cooper Vs Bugner** in 1971. The bout took place in late 1987, and Bugner suffered an eighth round TKO loss to the much younger and fresher world title contender for the Commonwealth championship in front of a huge crowd at **White Hart Lane** football stadium. Bugner promptly retired again following this defeat, only his 3rd stoppage defeat in 20 years.

1990s

Inspired by the 45-year-old **George Foreman's** recapture of the heavyweight title, Bugner made a final comeback in 1995, beating Vince Cervi to win the Australian heavyweight title, followed by a win over West Turner. Bugner then fought fellow Briton and world title contender **Scott Welch** for the WBO Intercontinental Heavyweight Title. Welch proved too young and fresh for the now 46-year-old Bugner, handing him a TKO defeat in the 6th round.

Bugner continued to fight on against far younger opponents. In 1996 he defeated the respectable Young Haumona for the Pacific and Australasian Heavyweight title, retained it against Waisiki Ligaloa in 1997, added the Australian title by defeating the tough Colin Wilson and defending both titles against **Bob Mirovic** in 1998.

In 1998 Bugner's long-term tenacity finally gave him a world crown, albeit a lightly regarded title - the WBF version of the heavyweight crown - by defeating former WBA World Heavyweight Champion James "Bonecrusher" Smith. At the age of 48 years and 110 days, it made him the oldest ever boxer to hold a world championship belt.^{[11][12]}

Bugner was to fight just once more, in 1999 at the age of 49 he defeated the durable fringe contender Levi Billups, after which he finally retired for good.

2.26.3 Fight record

His record for 83 professional fights is 69 wins (41 on knockouts), 13 Losses and 1 Draw. He last fought in June 1999 beating Levi Billups, who was disqualified for low blows.^[13]

In an interview in 2004, Bugner said that the hardest puncher he had ever faced was Earnie Shavers and the biggest beating he took was from Ron Lyle.^[14]

2.26.4 Life outside boxing

After moving to Australia, Bugner and his wife Marlene opened a vineyard. It failed in 1989, and he lost an estimated two million Australian dollars.^[9]

He now lives on the Gold Coast, Queensland.

Bugner has had some work in the film industry. In 1979 he featured in an Italian movie, *Io sto con gli ippopotami* with Bud Spencer and Terence Hill, he worked with Bud Spencer in his movies in the eighties.

He worked as the expert adviser on the Russell Crowe film, *Cinderella Man*, which was a film about the heavyweight boxer James J. Braddock.^[15] Bugner was dropped part way through the project, which prompted him to call Crowe, "a gutless worm and a f*****g girl".^{[16][17]}

Joe suffers from a serious back injury he sustained from

training for fights in his middle years. He also has financial problems. It was these financial problems which prompted him to re-enter the ring at such an advanced age. A benefit was held for Bugner in 2008 by **Kevin Lueshing**.^[18]

In November 2009 Bugner replaced Camilla Dallerup on day 4 of the British TV show *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here!*. He left the show on day 16 after losing a bush-tucker trial called 'Jungle Jail' to fellow celebrity **Stuart Manning**.

He has three children, James, Joe Jnr and Amy from Melody a previous wife.^[19]

Bugner's autobiography, 'Joe Bugner - My Story', was published by New Holland Publishing (Australia) in November 2013.

2.26.5 Professional Boxing record

2.26.6 References

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- [20] “Joe Bugner : Boxer”. Boxrec.com. Retrieved 25 October 2012.

2.26.7 External links

- Professional boxing record for Joe Bugner from BoxRec
- Career Record Extended
- Joe Bugner at the Internet Movie Database

2.27 Ken Norton

This article is about the boxer. For his son, the American football player, see Ken Norton, Jr. For the English cricketer, see Ken Norton (cricketer). For the college basketball coach, see Ken Norton (basketball).

Kenneth Howard Norton, Sr. (August 9, 1943 – September 18, 2013), best known as **Ken Norton**, was an American professional boxer. He was the **WBC world heavyweight champion** from 1977 to 1978 and is best known for his trilogy with Muhammad Ali, in which he defeated Ali in their first bout by split decision over twelve rounds in March 1973. Their rematch also ended in a split decision, this time in favour of Ali. The third fight was won by Ali, but many observers thought Norton had won. He also is known for his classic title fight with Larry Holmes in June 1978. In 1992, Norton was inducted into the **International Boxing Hall of Fame**. He died of stroke complications at a care facility in Henderson, Nevada on September 18, 2013 at the age of 70.

2.27.1 Early years

Norton was an outstanding athlete at Jacksonville High School. He was a member of the state championship football team and was selected to the all-state team on defense as a senior in 1960. His track coach entered him in eight events, and Norton placed first in seven of them. As a result, the “Ken Norton Rule”, which limits participation of an athlete to a maximum of four track and field

events, was instituted in Illinois high school sports. After graduating from high school, Norton went to Northeast Missouri State University (now Truman State University) on a football scholarship and studied elementary education.^[2] In an interview with *ESPN Fitness Magazine* in 1985, Norton said that he would have become a teacher or a policeman if he had not taken up boxing.^[3]

2.27.2 Boxing career

Norton started boxing when he was in the United States Marine Corps from 1963 to 1967, compiling a 24–2 record en route to three All-Marine Heavyweight titles. In time, Ken became the best boxer to ever fight for the Marines, and was awarded the North Carolina AAU Golden Gloves, International AAU and Pan American titles.^{[4][5][6]} Following the National AAU finals in 1967, he turned professional.

Norton built up a steady string of wins, some against journeyman fighters and others over fringe contenders like the giant Jack O'Halloran. He was learning and improving. But he suffered a surprise defeat, ironically just after *The Ring* magazine had profiled him as a prospect, at the hands of heavy hitting Venezuelan boxer Jose Luis Garcia in 1970. It was justifiably Garcia's career peak. But Garcia was overpowered, both then as rated contenders, in their rematch five years later.

Norton was given the motivational book *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill,^{[7][8][9]} which, as he states in his autobiography, *Going the Distance*, changed his life.^[10] Shortly before he died, Norton stated “Think and Grow Rich changed my life dramatically. I was going to fight Muhammad Ali. I was a green fighter, but yet I won, all through reading this book.”^[11] Upon reading *Think and Grow Rich*, he went on a 14-fight winning streak, including the shocking victory noted above over Muhammad Ali in 1973 to win the North American Boxing Federation heavyweight champion title.^{[12][13]} To quote Norton from his autobiography noted above, “These words (from Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich*) were the final inspiration in my victory over Ali: *Life's battles don't always go to the stronger or faster man, but sooner or later the man who wins is the man who thinks he can.*”^[14] Norton also took a complete course by Napoleon Hill on gaining wealth and peace of mind. “It can be related to anybody, to be the best in a career, to think positive”, said Norton.^[15]

An article which appeared in *The Southeast Missourian*^[16] discussed that Norton credited Napoleon Hill's philosophy for his success. To quote from the article, “Norton says he's a believer in Napoleon Hill's philosophy, that a person can do anything he puts his mind to. 'So I train for my fights,' he says, 'mentally as well as physically. One thing I do is only watch films of the fights in which I've done well or in which my opponent has done poorly.'”

Ken Norton once said, "In boxing, and in all of life, nobody should ever stop learning!"^[17]

Versus Ali, first and second fight

'Name' opponents were elusive in Norton's early career. His first big break came with a clear win over respected contender Henry Clark. This helped get him his world recognition break when Ali agreed to a match. Joe Frazier, who'd sparred with Norton, presciently said of Ali, "He'll have plenty of trouble!" Though both were top boxers in the mid 1970s, Norton and Frazier never fought each other, in part because they shared the same trainer, Eddie Futch, and also that they were friends.^[18]

For the first match, on March 31, 1973, Muhammad Ali entered the ring at the San Diego Sports Arena^[19] wearing a robe given to him by Elvis Presley as a 5–1 favorite versus Ken Norton, then rated a number 6 world contender^[20] in a bout televised by ABC's *Wide World of Sports*.^[21] Norton won a 12-round split decision over Ali in his adopted hometown of San Diego to win the NABF heavyweight title.^[13] In this bout, Norton broke Ali's jaw (he maintains in round eleven, though Angelo Dundee said it was earlier), leading to only the second defeat for "The Greatest" in his career. (Ali's only previous loss was to Joe Frazier, and Ali would later go on to defeat George Foreman to regain the heavyweight title in 1974.)

Almost six months later at The Forum in Inglewood, California, on September 10, 1973, Ali avenged the Norton loss but only after he got the return by a split decision.^[22] Norton weighed in at 205 lbs (5 pounds lighter than his first match with Ali) and boxing scribes discussed that his preparation was too intense and that perhaps he had overtrained. There were some furious exchanges in this hard-fought battle. From Ali's point of view, a loss here would have seriously dented his claim of ever being "The Greatest." During the ABC broadcast of the fight, broadcaster (and Ali confidant and friend) Howard Cosell repeatedly told viewers a dancing and jabbing Ali was dominating the action despite Norton's constant offense and Ali's inability to penetrate Norton's awkward defensive style. The close and controversial scoring was in stark contrast to Cosell's fight-long insistence that Ali had matters well in hand.

Championship challenge against Foreman

In 1974, Norton fought George Foreman for the world heavyweight championship but was stopped in two rounds at Poliedro of Caracas, Venezuela. After an even first round, Foreman staggered Norton with an uppercut a minute into round two, buckling him into the ropes. Norton did not hit the canvas, but continued on wobbly legs, clearly not having recovered, and shortly he went down a further two times in quick succession, with the referee in-

tervening and stopping the fight. This fight would become known as the "Caracas Caper".

In 1975, Norton regained the NABF heavyweight title when he impressively defeated Jerry Quarry by TKO in the fifth round. Norton then avenged his above-mentioned 1970 loss to Jose Luis Garcia by decisively knocking out Garcia in round five.

Third Ali match

On September 28, 1976, at Yankee Stadium in New York City, Norton would again fight Ali,^[22] who was now the world heavyweight champion since regaining the title with an eighth-round knockout of George Foreman in 1974. Many observers have felt this was the beginning of Ali's decline as a boxer. It was a tough bruising battle for Ali. In one of the most disputed fights in history, the fight was even on the judges' scorecards going into the final round, which Ali won on both the referee's and judges' scorecards to retain the world heavyweight championship. The judges scored the bout 8–7 for Ali, and the referee scored it 8–6 for Ali. At the end of the last round, the commentator announced he would be "very surprised" if Norton has not won the fight.^[23]

At the time of the third Ali-Norton bout, the last time a heavyweight champion had lost the title by decision was Max Baer to Jim Braddock 41 years earlier, and Ali-Norton III did not set a new marker. The January 1998 issue of *Boxing Monthly* listed Ali-Norton as the fifth most disputed title fight decision in boxing history. The unofficial UPI scorecard was 8–7 for Norton, and the unofficial AP scorecard was 9–6 for Ali.

But Ali had received a pounding. His tactics were to try to push Norton back, but they had failed. He'd refused to 'dance' until the 9th when in sheer desperation, although the crowd massively roared its appreciation. Norton has said the third fight with Ali was the last boxing match for which he was fully motivated, owing to his disappointment at having lost a fight he believed he had clearly won.

Aftermath: Norton becomes champion & Young match

1977 was a top year for Norton. He knocked out previously unbeaten top prospect Duane Bobick in just one round. Then dispatched European title holder Lorenzo Zannon in a 'tune-up' fight. Light-hitting but fast, Zannon was actually well ahead until a burst of heavy punches put him down and out. Norton next beat polished number two contender Jimmy Young (who himself had beaten George Foreman and Ron Lyle) in a 15-round split decision in a WBC big mandatory title-elimination fight, with the winner to face reigning WBC champion Ali, but Ali's camp told *Ring Magazine* they did not want to fight Norton for a fourth time. Both boxers fought a smart fight, with Norton using a heavy body attack whilst Young moved well

and countered. Many observers thought the decision controversial.

Plans, however, changed on February 15, 1978. On that night, in front of a nationwide television audience, Ali lost his title to **Leon Spinks**. The WBC then ordered a match between the new champion and its number one contender, but Spinks chose instead to give the fallen champion the first shot at taking his title^[24] rather than face Norton.^[25] The WBC responded on March 18, 1978, by retroactively giving title fight status to Norton's victory over Young the year before and awarded Norton their championship, which split the heavyweight championship for the first time since **Jimmy Ellis** and **Joe Frazier** were both recognized as champions in the early 1970s.^{[4][26]}

Larry Holmes title fight

In his first defense of the WBC title on June 9, 1978, Norton and new #1 contender **Larry Holmes** met in a classic fight. After 15 brutal rounds, Holmes was awarded the title via an extremely close split decision. The three judges' cards were as follows: 143–142 for Holmes, 143–142 for Holmes, and 143–142 for Norton.^[27] The Associated Press scored it 143–142 for Norton.^[28] The March 2001 edition of *The Ring* magazine listed the final round of the Holmes-Norton bout as the 7th most exciting round in boxing history. As noted above, Holmes-Norton is ranked as the 10th greatest heavyweight fight of all time by Monte D. Cox, a member of the International Boxing Research Organization (IBRO). Holmes went on to become the third-longest reigning world heavyweight champion in the history of boxing, behind **Joe Louis** and **Wladimir Klitschko**. Years later, Holmes wrote of his experience that this was his toughest match in over 70 contests.

Retirement looms

After losing to Holmes, Norton won his next fight by knockout over sixth-ranked **Randy Stephens** in 1978^[29] before taking on **Earnie Shavers** in another compulsory WBC title eliminator fight in Las Vegas on March 23, 1979. It appeared for the first time that Norton's career had perhaps hit a decline, particularly after the Holmes match^[30] as Shavers took the former champion out in the first round. But it also created a view that his confidence wasn't good against all-time great hitters **Foreman**, **Shavers** and later **Cooney**. Although Norton himself always denied this and he was past his prime when he was stopped by Shavers and Cooney.^[31] (Norton's peak was 1973–1978.)^[32]

In his next fight, he fought to a draw with unheralded but durable lower ranked contender **Scott LeDoux** at the **Met Center** in **Minneapolis**. Norton dominated until sustaining an injury when he took a thumb in the eye in the eighth round, which immediately changed the bout. LeDoux

rallied from that point and Norton became decidedly fatigued. Norton was down two times in the final round, resulting in the draw; Norton fell behind on one scorecard, kept his lead on the second, and dropped to even on the third (the unofficial AP scorecard was 5–3–2 Norton).^[33]

After the fight, Norton decided that at 37 it was time to retire from boxing.^[34] However, not satisfied with the way he had gone out, Norton returned to the ring to face the undefeated **Randall "Tex" Cobb** in Cobb's home state of Texas on November 7, 1980. In an all action back-and-forth fight, Norton escaped with a split decision, with referee **Tony Perez** and judge **Chuck Hassett** voting in his favor and judge **Arlen Bynum** giving the fight to Cobb.



Pictured: (l-r) Cobb vs. Norton 1980

The win over the title-contending Cobb gave Norton another shot at a potential title-fight, and on May 11, 1981, at **Madison Square Garden** he stepped into the ring with top contender **Gerry Cooney**, who, like Cobb, was undefeated entering the fight. Very early in the fight it became clear that Norton was no longer the caliber of fighter he once was, as Cooney's first punch caused Norton's legs to buckle. Norton continued to take shots from Cooney in his corner for nearly a full minute before **Perez**, who refereed his last fight, stepped in to stop the bout 54 seconds in, as Norton was slumped in his corner. Norton decided to retire following the match and turned his attention to charitable pursuits.^[35] Norton's enduring legacy as a fighter is that he is considered second to **Joe Frazier** as Ali's main nemesis and toughest opponent. Norton fought Ali to three decisions and was never hurt or knocked down. All three bouts were close and subject to controversy. Unfortunately, Norton was less successful against three of the greatest punchers of all time, losing by KO to **Foreman** and **Shavers** and by TKO to **Cooney**.^[36] Norton was considered past his prime in boxing from 1979 to 1981.^[32]

Awards and recognitions

Ken Norton is a 1989 inductee of the World Boxing Hall of Fame, a 1992 inductee of the International Boxing Hall

of Fame,^[37] a 2004 inductee into the United States Marine Corps Sports Hall of Fame,^[4] and a 2008 inductee into the WBC Hall of Fame.

The 1998 holiday issue of *The Ring* ranked Norton #22 among “The 50 Greatest Heavyweights of All Time.” Norton received the Boxing Writers Association of America J. Niel trophy for “Fighter of the Year” in 1977.

Norton, a proponent of motivational author Napoleon Hill’s writings^[38] (e.g. *Think and Grow Rich*^{[12][39]} as noted above and *Success Through A Positive Mental Attitude*^[25] by Hill and W. Clement Stone) also received the “Napoleon Hill Award” for positive thinking in 1973.^[10]

In 2001, Norton was inducted by the San Diego Hall of Champions into the Breitbard Hall of Fame honoring San Diego’s finest athletes both on and off the playing surface.^[40] Norton was also inducted into the Marine Corps Hall of Fame in 2004 and into the California Sports Hall of Fame in 2011.^[41]

Unconventional style

Norton was a forward-pressing fighter/boxer who was notable for his unusual guard/stance characterised by the cross arm defence. The left arm low across the torso and right hand up by the right or left ear. But when under heavy pressure both arms were brought up high across at face level whilst one leant forward. This left the opponent little target in theory. The guard was also used by the legendary Archie Moore. George Foreman later used it very effectively during his famous comeback years. Tim Witherspoon was another practitioner. Joe Frazier even borrowed it for occasions in his third Ali match. The style is named the “cross-armed defense”. It tends to look crablike. Norton would bob and weave from a crouch, firing well placed heavy punches. Norton was best when advancing. He’d drag or slide the right foot along from behind. By comparison, most conventional boxers have elbows in at the torso with forearms vertically parallel to each another, the gloves then being both near sides of the face. Most trainers believe the conventional style is a better defense and that the cross-arm style leaves the user open far too often.

Angelo Dundee wrote that Norton’s best punch was the left hook. Many others lauded his infamous overhand right. In a *Ring Magazine* article, Norton himself said that a right uppercut to Jerry Quarry was the hardest blow he recalled landing.

Unlike many boxers, Norton would often not attempt to stare down an opponent while announcements were made before the match started. Instead, he’d often look down at the floor and gather his thoughts. He was also widely noted for his fine athletic build.

2.27.3 Later media career

Norton worked as an actor and TV boxing commentator following his retirement from boxing. He also was a member of the Sports Illustrated Speakers Bureau and started the Ken Norton Management Co., which represented athletes in contract negotiations.

Norton continued making TV, radio and public speaking appearances until suffering injuries in a near-fatal car accident in 1986. It left him with slow and slurred speech.^{[39][42][43]}

He appeared along with Ali, Foreman, Frazier and Holmes in a video, *Champions Forever*, discussing their best times, and in 2000 he published his autobiography, *Going the Distance*.

2.27.4 Family

Ken Norton was twice voted “Father of the Year” by the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and the *Los Angeles Times* in 1977.^{[39][44]} To quote Norton from his biography, *Believe: Journey From Jacksonville*: “Of all the titles that I’ve been privileged to have, the title of ‘dad’ has always been the best.”^[39]

His son, Ken Norton Jr, played football at UCLA and had a long successful career in the NFL. In tribute to his father’s boxing career, Ken Jr. would strike a boxing stance in the end zone each time he scored a defensive touchdown and throw a punching combination at the goalpost pad. Ken Jr was a member of three Super Bowl champion teams as a player and one as an assistant coach. He later became the linebackers’ coach for the Seattle Seahawks and currently works as the defensive coordinator for the Oakland Raiders.

Ken Norton’s other son, Keith Norton, was once the weekend sports anchor for KPRC in Houston, Texas.^[45] Ken Norton’s son, Keith, followed his father and served in the Marine Corps.^[46]

2.27.5 Death

Norton died at a care facility in Las Vegas on September 18, 2013.^[47] He was 70 years old and had suffered a series of strokes in later life.^[48] Across the boxing world tributes were paid, with George Foreman calling him “the fairest of them all” and Larry Holmes saying that he “will be incredibly missed in the boxing world and by many”.^[49]

2.27.6 Professional boxing record

Key

- KO – knock-out
- PTS – decision on points

- RTD – referee technical decision
- SD – split decision
- TKO – technical knockout
- UD – unanimous decision

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2.27.9 External links

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2.28 George Foreman

For the English footballer, see **George Foreman (footballer)**.

For the electric grill, see **George Foreman Grill**.

George Edward "Big George" Foreman (born January 10, 1949),^[1] is an American former professional boxer. In his boxing career he was a two-time world heavyweight champion and Olympic gold medalist. Outside the sport he went on to become an ordained minister, author and entrepreneur.

After a troubled childhood, Foreman took up boxing and was a gold medalist at the 1968 Olympics. He won the World Heavyweight title with a second-round knockout of then-undefeated **Joe Frazier** in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1973. He made two successful title defenses before losing to **Muhammad Ali** in "The Rumble in the Jungle" in 1974. He was unable to secure another title shot, and retired following a loss to **Jimmy Young** in 1977. Following what he referred to as a religious epiphany, Foreman became an ordained Christian minister. Ten years later, he announced a comeback and, in November 1994, at age 45, he regained the Heavyweight Championship by knocking out 27-year-old **Michael Moorer**. Foreman is the oldest Heavyweight Champion in history, and second oldest in any weight class after **Bernard Hopkins**. He retired in 1997 at the age of 48, with a final record of 76–5, including 68 knockouts.

Foreman has been inducted into the World Boxing Hall of Fame and the International Boxing Hall of Fame. The International Boxing Research Organization (IBRO) rates Foreman as the eighth greatest heavyweight of all-time.^[2] In 2002, he was named one of the 25 greatest fighters of the past 80 years by *The Ring* magazine.^[3] *The Ring* ranked him as the 9th greatest puncher of all-time.^[4] He was a ringside analyst for HBO's boxing coverage for twelve years, leaving in 2004.^[5] Outside of boxing, he is a successful entrepreneur and is known for his promotion of the **George Foreman Grill**, which has sold over 100 million units worldwide.^[6] In 1999 he sold the naming rights to the grill for \$138 million.^[7]

2.28.1 Early life

George Foreman was born in Marshall, Texas. He grew up in the Fifth Ward, Houston, with six siblings.^[8] Although he was raised by J.D. Foreman, whom his mother had married when George was a small child, his biological father was Leroy Moorehead. Foreman was interested in football and idolized **Jim Brown**, but gave it up for boxing. He won a gold medal in the boxing/heavyweight division at the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Games. By his own admission in his autobiography, George was a troubled youth. He dropped out of school at the age of fifteen and later joined the Job Corps. After moving to Pleasanton, California, with the help of a supervisor he began to train in boxing.

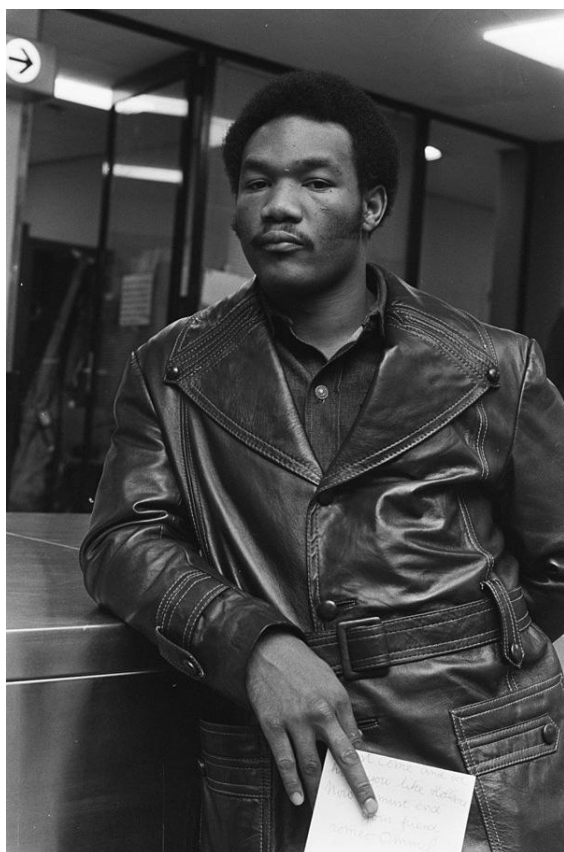
2.28.2 Professional career

Foreman had an amateur record of 22–4, losing twice to **Clay Hodges** (also defeated by **Max Briggs** in his first ever fight). Foreman turned professional in 1969 with a three-round knockout of **Donald Walheim** in New York. He had a total of 13 fights that year, winning all of them (11 by knockout).

In 1970, Foreman continued his march toward the undisputed heavyweight title, winning all 12 of his bouts (11 by knockout). Among the opponents he defeated were **Gregorio Peralta**, whom he decisioned at **Madison Square Garden** although Peralta showed that Foreman was vulnerable to fast counter punching mixed with an assertive boxing style. Foreman then defeated **George Chuvalo** by technical knockout (TKO) in three rounds. After this win, Foreman defeated **Charlie Polite** in four rounds and **Boone Kirkman** in three.

In 1971, Foreman won seven more fights, winning all of them by knockout, including a rematch with Peralta, whom he defeated by knockout in the tenth and final round in Oakland, California, and a win over **Leroy Caldwell**, who was knocked out in the second round. After amassing a record of 32–0 (29 KO), he was ranked as the number one challenger by the WBA and WBC.

Sunshine Showdown versus Joe Frazier



George Foreman in 1973

Main article: [Joe Frazier vs. George Foreman](#)

In 1972, still undefeated and with an impressive knockout record, Foreman was set to challenge undefeated and **Undisputed World Heavyweight Champion Joe Frazier**. Despite boycotting a title elimination caused by the vacancy resulting from the championship being stripped from **Muhammad Ali**, Frazier had won the title from **Jimmy Ellis** and defended his title four times since, including a 15-round unanimous decision over the previously unbeaten Ali in 1971 after Ali had beaten **Oscar Bonavena** and **Jerry Quarry**. Despite Foreman's superior size and reach, he was not expected to beat Frazier^[9] and was a 3:1 underdog going into the fight.

The Sunshine Showdown took place on January 22, 1973, in Kingston, Jamaica, with Foreman dominating the fight to win the championship by technical knockout. In ABC's re-broadcast, **Howard Cosell** made the memorable call, "Down goes Frazier! Down goes Frazier! Down goes Frazier!" Before the fight Frazier was 29–0 (25 KO) and Foreman was 37–0 (34 KO). Frazier was knocked down six times by Foreman within two rounds, with the three knockdowns rule being waived for this bout. After the second knockdown, Frazier's balance and mobility were impaired to the extent that he was unable to evade Foreman's combinations. Frazier managed to get to his

feet for all six knockdowns, but referee **Arthur Mercante** eventually called an end to the one-sided bout.

Foreman was sometimes characterized by the media as an aloof and antisocial champion.^[10] According to them, he always seemed to wear a sneer and was not often available to the press. Foreman later attributed his demeanor during this time as an emulation of **Sonny Liston**, for whom he had been an occasional sparring partner. Foreman defended his title successfully twice during his initial reign as champion. His first defense, in Tokyo, pitted him against **Puerto Rican Heavyweight Champion José Roman**. Roman was not regarded as a top contender, and it took Foreman only 2 minutes to end the fight, one of the fastest knockouts in a Heavyweight Championship bout.

Title defense versus Ken Norton

Main article: [George Foreman vs. Ken Norton](#)

Foreman's next defense was against a much tougher opponent. In 1974, in **Caracas, Venezuela**, he faced the highly regarded hall-of-famer **Ken Norton** (who was 30–2), a boxer noted for his awkward crossed-arm boxing style, crab-like defense, and heavy punch (a style Foreman emulated in his comeback), who had broken the jaw of **Muhammad Ali** in a points victory a year earlier. Norton had a good chin and had performed well against Ali in their two matches, winning the first on points and nearly winning the second. (Norton developed a reputation for showing nerves against heavy hitters, largely beginning with this fight.) After an even first round, Foreman staggered Norton with an uppercut a minute into round two, buckling him into the ropes. Norton did not hit the canvas but continued on wobbly legs, clearly not having recovered, and shortly he went down a further two times in quick succession, with the referee intervening and stopping the fight. "Ken was awesome when he got going. I didn't want him to get into the fight," Foreman said when interviewed years later. This fight became known as the "Caracas Caper".

Foreman had cruised past two of the top names in the rankings. The win gave him a 40–0 record with 37 knockouts.

Rumble in the Jungle

Main article: [The Rumble in the Jungle](#)

Foreman's next title defence, against **Muhammad Ali**, was historic. During the summer of 1974, he traveled to **Zaire** (now the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**) to defend his title against Ali. The bout was promoted as "The Rumble in the Jungle."

During training in Zaire, Foreman suffered a cut above his eye, forcing postponement of the match for a month.

The injury affected his training regimen, as it meant he couldn't spar in the build-up to the fight and risk the cut being re-opened. He later commented: "That was the best thing that happened to Ali when we were in Africa—the fact that I had to get ready for the fight without being able to box."^[11] Foreman later also claimed he was drugged by his trainer prior to the bout.^[12] Ali used this time to tour Zaire, endearing himself to the public while taunting Foreman at every opportunity. Foreman was favored, having knocked out both Joe Frazier and Ken Norton within two rounds.

When Foreman and Ali finally met in the ring, Ali began more aggressively than expected, outscoring Foreman with superior punching speed. However, Ali quickly realized that this approach required him to move much more than Foreman and would cause him to tire. In the second round, Ali retreated to the ropes, shielding his head and hitting Foreman in the face at every opportunity. Foreman dug vicious body punches into Ali's sides; however, Foreman was unable to land many big punches to Ali's head. The ring ropes, being much looser than usual (Foreman later charged that *Angelo Dundee* had loosened them, and this story is supported by Norman Mailer in the book *The Fight*), allowed Ali to lean back and away from Foreman's wild swings and then grab Foreman behind the head, forcing Foreman to expend much extra energy untangling himself. Ali also constantly pushed down on Foreman's neck but was never warned about doing so. To this day, it is unclear whether Ali's pre-fight talk of using speed and movement against Foreman had been just a diversionary tactic or whether his use of what became known as the "Rope-a-dope" tactic was an improvisation necessitated by Foreman's constant pressure.

In either case, Ali was able to occasionally counter off the ropes with blows to the face and penetrated Foreman's defense. Ali continued to take heavy punishment to the body and occasionally a hard jolt to the head. Ali later said he was "out on his feet" twice during the bout. Eventually, Foreman began to tire, and his punches became increasingly wild, losing power in the process. An increasingly confident Ali taunted Foreman throughout the bout. Late in the eighth round, Foreman was left off balance by a haymaker, and Ali sprang off the ropes with a flurry to Foreman's head, punctuated by a hard right cross that landed flush on the jaw, knocking Foreman down. *Muhammad Ali* was ultimately the only boxer to stop Foreman.

Foreman later reflected that "it just wasn't my night". Though he sought one, he was unable to secure a rematch with Ali. It has been suggested in some quarters that Ali was ducking Foreman, although he did give a rematch to Joe Frazier and to Ken Norton. Ali also preferred to fight such lowly ranked opponents as *Chuck Wepner*, *Richard Dunn*, *Jean Pierre Coopman*, and *Alfredo Evangelista*.^[13]

First comeback

Main article: [George Foreman vs. Joe Frazier II](#)

Foreman remained inactive during 1975. In 1976, he announced a comeback and stated his intention of securing a rematch with Ali. His first opponent was to be *Ron Lyle*, who had been defeated by *Muhammad Ali* in 1975, via 11-th round TKO. At the end of the first round, Lyle landed a hard right that sent Foreman staggering across the ring. In the second round, Foreman pounded Lyle against the ropes and might have scored a KO, but due to a timekeeping error the bell rang with a minute still remaining in the round and Lyle survived. In the third, Foreman pressed forward, with Lyle waiting to counter off the ropes. In the fourth, a brutal slugfest erupted. A cluster of power punches from Lyle sent Foreman to the canvas. When Foreman got up, Lyle staggered him again, but just as Foreman seemed finished, he retaliated with a hard right to the side of the head, knocking down Lyle. Lyle beat the count, then landed another brutal combination, knocking Foreman down for the second time. Again, Foreman beat the count. Foreman said later that he had never been hit so hard in a fight and remembered looking down at the canvas and seeing blood. In the fifth round, both fighters continued to ignore defense and traded their hardest punches, looking crude. Each man staggered the other, and each seemed almost out on his feet. Then, as if finally tired, Lyle stopped punching, and Foreman delivered a dozen unanswered blows until Lyle collapsed. Lyle remained on the canvas and was counted out, giving Foreman the KO victory. The fight was named by *The Ring* as "The Fight Of The Year."

For his next bout, Foreman chose to face Joe Frazier in a rematch. Because of the one-sided Foreman victory in their first fight, and the fact that Frazier had taken a tremendous amount of punishment from Ali in Manila a year earlier, few expected him to win. Frazier at this point was 32–3, and Foreman was 41–1. However, the 2nd Foreman-Frazier fight was fairly competitive for its duration, as Frazier used quick head movements to make Foreman miss with his hardest punches. Frazier was wearing a contact lens for his vision which was knocked loose during the bout. After being unable to mount a significant offense, Frazier was eventually floored twice by Foreman in the fifth round and the fight was stopped. Next, Foreman knocked out *Scott LeDoux* in three rounds and prospect *John Dino Denis* in four to finish the year.

Retirement and spiritual rebirth

1977 proved to be a life changing year for Foreman. After knocking out *Pedro Agosto* in four rounds at Pensacola, Florida, Foreman flew to Puerto Rico a day before the fight without giving himself time to acclimatise. His opponent was the skilled boxer *Jimmy Young*,

who had beaten **Ron Lyle** and lost a very controversial decision to Muhammad Ali the previous year. Foreman fought cautiously early on, allowing Young to settle into the fight. Young constantly complained about Foreman pushing him, for which Foreman eventually had a point deducted by the referee, although Young was never warned for his persistent holding. Foreman badly hurt Young in round 7 but was unable to land a finishing blow. Foreman tired during the second half of the fight and suffered a **flash knockdown** in round 12 en route to losing a decision.

Foreman became ill in his dressing room after the fight. He was suffering from exhaustion and **heatstroke** and believed he had a **near death experience**. He spoke of being in a hellish, frightening place of nothingness and despair, and realized that he was in the midst of death. Though not yet religious, he began to plead with God to help him. He explained that he sensed God asking him to change his life and ways. When he said, "I don't care if this is death – I still believe there is a God," he felt a hand pull him out and sensed that he was also suffering **stigmata**. After this experience, Foreman became a **born-again Christian**, dedicating his life for the next decade to God. Although he did not formally retire from boxing, Foreman stopped fighting and became an ordained minister, initially preaching on street corners before becoming the reverend at the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in Houston^[14] and devoting himself to his family and his congregation. He also opened a youth center^[15] that bears his name. Foreman continues to share his conversion experience on Christian television broadcasts such as *The 700 Club* and the Trinity Broadcasting Network and later joked that Young had knocked the devil out of him.

Second comeback

Main articles: **George Foreman vs. Gerry Cooney**, **Evander Holyfield vs. George Foreman** and **George Foreman vs. Tommy Morrison**

In 1987, after 10 years away from the ring, Foreman surprised the boxing world by announcing a comeback at the age of 38. In his autobiography, he wrote that his primary motive was to raise money to fund the youth center he had created, which had required much of the money he had earned in the initial phase of his career. Another stated ambition was to fight **Mike Tyson**.^[16] For his first fight, he went to Sacramento, California, where he beat journeyman Steve Zouski by a knockout in four rounds. Foreman weighed 267 lb (121 kg) for the fight and looked badly out of shape. Although many thought his decision to return to the ring was a mistake, Foreman countered that he had returned to prove that age was not a barrier to people achieving their goals (as he said later, he wanted to show that age 40 is not a "death sentence"). He won four more bouts that year, gradually slimming down and improving his fitness. In 1988, he won nine

times. Perhaps his most notable win during this period was a seventh-round knockout of former Light Heavyweight and Cruiserweight Champion **Dwight Muhammad Qawi**.

Having always been a deliberate fighter, Foreman had not lost much mobility in the ring since his first "retirement," although he found it harder to keep his balance after throwing big punches and could no longer throw rapid combinations. He was still capable of landing heavy single blows, however. The late-round fatigue that had plagued him in the ring as a young man now seemed to be unexpectedly gone, and he could comfortably compete for 12 rounds. Foreman attributed this to his new, relaxed fighting style (he has spoken of how, earlier in his career, his lack of stamina came from an enormous amount of nervous tension).

By 1989, while continuing his comeback, Foreman had sold his name and face for the advertising of various products, selling everything from **grills** to **mufflers** on TV. For this purpose his public persona was reinvented, and the formerly aloof, ominous Foreman had been replaced by a smiling, friendly George. He and Ali had become friends, and he followed in Ali's footsteps by making himself a celebrity outside the boundaries of boxing.

Foreman continued his string of victories, winning five more fights, the most impressive being a three-round win over **Bert Cooper**, who went on to contest the Undisputed Heavyweight title against **Evander Holyfield**.

In 1990, Foreman met former title challenger **Gerry Cooney** in Atlantic City. Cooney was coming off a long period of inactivity, but was well regarded for his punching power. Cooney wobbled Foreman in the first round, but Foreman landed several powerful punches in the second round. Cooney was knocked down twice and Foreman had scored a devastating KO. Foreman went on to win four more fights that year.

Then, in 1991, Foreman was given the opportunity to challenge Undisputed Heavyweight Champion **Evander Holyfield**, who was in tremendous shape at 208 pounds, for the world title in a **Pay Per View** boxing event. Very few boxing experts gave the 42-year-old Foreman a chance of winning. Foreman, who weighed in at 257 pounds, began the contest by marching forward, absorbing several of Holyfield's best combinations and occasionally landing a powerful swing of his own. Holyfield proved too tough and agile to knock down and was well ahead on points throughout the fight, but Foreman surprised many by lasting the full 12 rounds, losing his challenge on points. Round 7, in which Foreman knocked Holyfield off balance before being staggered by a powerful combination, was expected to be *Ring Magazine's* "Round of the Year", though no award was given in 1991.^[17]

A year later, Foreman fought journeyman **Alex Stewart**, who had previously been stopped in the first round by **Mike Tyson**. Foreman knocked down Stewart twice in

the second round but expended a lot of energy in doing so. He subsequently tired, and Stewart rebounded. By the end of the 10th and final round, Foreman's face was bloodied and swollen, but the judges awarded him a majority decision win.

In 1993, Foreman received another title shot, although this was for the vacant WBO Championship, which most fans at the time saw as a second-tier version of the "real" Heavyweight title, then being contested between Holyfield and Riddick Bowe. Foreman's opponent was Tommy Morrison, a young prospect known for his punching power. To the frustration of Foreman and the disappointment of the booing crowd, Morrison retreated throughout the fight, refusing to trade toe-to-toe, and sometimes even turned his back on Foreman. The strategy paid off, however, as he outboxed Foreman from long range. Foreman was competitive throughout the match, but after 12 rounds, Morrison won a unanimous decision.

Regaining the title

Main articles: Michael Moorer vs. George Foreman, George Foreman vs. Axel Schulz and George Foreman vs. Shannon Briggs

In 1994, Foreman once again sought to challenge for the world championship after Michael Moorer had beaten Holyfield for the IBF and WBA titles.

Having lost his last fight against Morrison, Foreman was unranked and in no position to demand another title shot. His relatively high profile, however, made a title shot against Moorer, 19 years his junior, a lucrative prospect at seemingly little risk for the champion.

Foreman's title challenge against Moorer took place on November 5 in Las Vegas, Nevada, with Foreman wearing the same red trunks he had worn in his title loss to Ali 20 years earlier. This time, however, Foreman was a substantial underdog. For nine rounds, Moorer easily outboxed him, hitting and moving away, while Foreman chugged forward, seemingly unable to "pull the trigger" on his punches. Entering the tenth round, Foreman was trailing on all scorecards. However, Foreman launched a comeback in the tenth round and hit Moorer with a number of punches. Then a short right hand caught Moorer on the tip of his chin, gashing open his bottom lip and he collapsed to the canvas. He lay flat on his back as the referee counted him out.

In an instant, Foreman had regained the title he had lost to Muhammad Ali two decades before. He went back to his corner and knelt in prayer as the arena erupted in cheers. With this historic victory, Foreman broke three records: he became, at age 45, the oldest fighter ever to win the World Heavyweight Championship; 20 years after losing his title for the first time, he broke the record for the fighter with the longest interval between his first

and second world championships; and the age spread of 19 years between the champion and challenger was the largest of any heavyweight boxing championship fight.

Shortly after the Moorer fight, Foreman began talking about a potential superfight against Mike Tyson (the youngest ever heavyweight champ). The WBA organization, however, demanded he fight their No. 1 challenger, who at the time was the competent but aging Tony Tucker. For reasons not clearly known, Foreman refused to fight Tucker and allowed the WBA to strip him of that belt. He then went on to fight mid-level prospect Axel Schulz of Germany in defense of his remaining IBF title. Schulz was a major underdog. Schulz jabbed strongly from long range and grew increasingly confident as the fight progressed. Foreman finished the fight with a swelling over one eye, but was awarded a controversial majority decision. The IBF ordered an immediate rematch to be held in Germany, but Foreman refused the terms and found himself stripped of his remaining title. However, Foreman continued to be recognized as the Lineal Heavyweight Champion.

In 1996, Foreman returned to Tokyo, scoring an easy win over the unrated Crawford Grimsley by a 12-round decision. In 1997, he faced contender Lou Savarese, winning a close decision in a grueling, competitive encounter. Then, yet another opportunity came Foreman's way as the WBC decided to match him against Shannon Briggs in a 1997 "eliminator bout" for the right to face WBC champion Lennox Lewis. After 12 rounds, in which Foreman consistently rocked Briggs with power punches, almost everyone at ringside saw Foreman as the clear winner.^[18] Once again there was a controversial decision—but this time it went in favor of Foreman's opponent, with Briggs awarded a points win. Foreman had fought for the last time, at the age of 48.

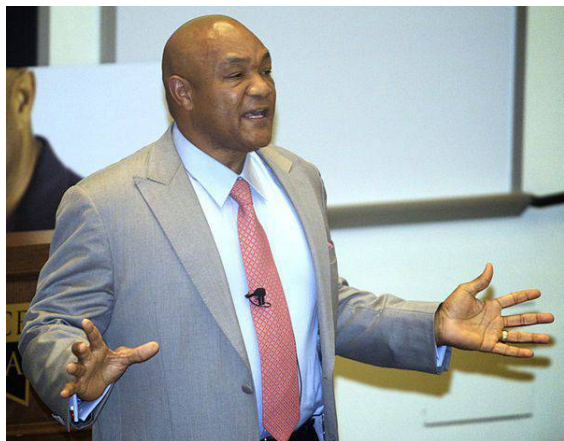
Second retirement

Foreman was gracious and philosophical in his loss to Briggs, but announced his "final" retirement shortly afterwards. However, he did plan a return bout against Larry Holmes in 1999, scheduled to take place at the Houston Astrodome on pay per view. The fight was to be billed as "The Birthday Bash" due to both fighters' upcoming birthdays. Foreman was set to make \$10 million and Holmes was to make \$4 million, but negotiations fell through and the fight was cancelled. With a continuing affinity for the sport, Foreman became a respected boxing analyst for HBO.

Foreman said he had no plans to resume his career as a boxer, but then announced in February 2004 that he was training for one more comeback fight to demonstrate that the age of 55, like 40, is not a "death sentence." The bout, against an unspecified opponent (rumored to be Trevor Berbick), never materialized (it was widely thought that Foreman's wife had been a major factor in the change of

plans). Having severed his relationship with HBO to pursue other opportunities, George Foreman and the sport of boxing finally went their separate ways.

2.28.3 Family and private life



Foreman speaking in Houston, Texas, in September 2009

Foreman has 12 children: five sons and seven daughters. His five sons are George Jr., George III (“Monk”), George IV (“Big Wheel”), George V (“Red”), and George VI (“Little Joey”). The two daughters from his marriage are Natalia and Leola; his three daughters from a separate relationship are Michi, Freeda, and Georgetta. He adopted a daughter, Isabella Brandie Lilja (Foreman), in 2009; and another, Courtney Isaac (Foreman), in 2012.

2.28.4 George Foreman Grill

Main article: [George Foreman Grill](#)

When Foreman came back from retirement he argued that his success was due to his healthy eating, which made him a perfect fit for Salton, Inc., which was looking for a spokesperson for its fat-reducing grill, in which Foreman had some influence designing. Hulk Hogan had previously been considered, but chose to pitch the *Hulkamania Meatball Maker* instead.^[19] The George Foreman Grill has sold over 100 million units since it was first launched, a feat achieved in a little over 15 years.

Although Foreman has never confirmed exactly how much he has earned from the endorsement, it is known that Salton paid him \$137 million in 1999, for the right to use his name. Prior to that, he was paid about 40% of the profits on each grill sold (earning him \$4.5 million a month in payouts at its peak), so it is estimated he has made a total of over \$200 million from the endorsement, substantially more than he earned as a boxer.^[20]

2.28.5 Amateur accomplishments

Source:^[21]

- Won his first amateur fight on January 26, 1967 by a first-round knockout in the Parks Diamond Belt Tournament.
- Won the San Francisco Examiner’s Golden Gloves Tournament in the Junior Division in February 1967.
- February 1967: Knocked out Thomas Cook to win the Las Vegas Golden Gloves in the Senior Division.
- February 1968: Knocked out L.C. Brown to win the San Francisco Examiner’s Senior Title in San Francisco.
- March 1968: Won the National AAU Heavyweight title in Toledo, Ohio vs. Henry Crump of Philadelphia, PA in the final.
- July 1968: Sparring five rounds on two different occasions with former World Heavyweight Champion **Sonny Liston**.
- September 21, 1968: Won his second decision over Otis Evans to make the U.S. boxing team for the Mexico City Olympic Games.
- Foreman had a 16–4 amateur boxing record going into the Olympics. He knocked out the Soviet Union’s Jonas Čepulis to win the Olympic Games Heavyweight Gold Medal. He was trained for the Olympic Games by Robert (Pappy) Gault.
- Amateur record: 22–4^[22]

2.28.6 Professional boxing record

2.28.7 Achievements

2.28.8 See also

- [List of heavyweight boxing champions](#)
- [List of WBC world champions](#)
- [Notable boxing families](#)
- [George Foreman Grill](#)

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2.28.10 External links

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- Professional boxing record for George Foreman from BoxRec
- George Foreman – IBHOF Biography
- George Foreman’s Amateur Boxing Record
- George Foreman at the Internet Movie Database
- George Foreman at TV.com

2.29 Chuck Wepner

Charles “Chuck” Wepner (born February 26, 1939) is an American former professional boxer who fought at heavyweight.^{[1][2]} As a world ranked contender he almost went fifteen rounds with world heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali in a 1975 title fight, though Wepner was throwing numerous rabbit punches to the head of Ali. Ali, infuriated by Wepner’s act started doing the same. The referee ignored many of the fouls committed by Wepner, but warned Ali to stop throwing rabbit punches. Ali later described the referee as “dirty”. Wepner scored notable wins over Randy Neumann and Ernie Terrell.

2.29.1 Career

Early life and career

Wepner was born in New York City, New York, the son of Dolores (Hrynko) and Charles William Wepner.^{[3][4]} He is of German, Ukrainian, and Belorussian descent.^[5] Nicknamed “The Bayonne Bleeder,” he debuted as a professional boxer in 1964 and began posting many wins and some losses. He had formerly boxed while a member of the United States Marine Corps, and had worked as a bouncer before turning pro.^[6] He was the New Jersey State Heavyweight Boxing Champion and popular fighter in the Northeast’s Club Boxing circuit. But after losing fights to George Foreman (by knockout in three) and Sonny Liston (by knockout in ten) many boxing fans thought that his days as a contender were numbered. After the fight with Liston, Wepner needed 72 stitches in his face.

However, after losing to Joe Bugner by a knockout in three in England, Wepner won nine of his next eleven fights, including victories over Charlie Polite and former WBA Heavyweight champion Ernie Terrell.

Muhammad Ali fight

In 1975, it was announced Wepner would challenge Muhammad Ali for the world’s Heavyweight title.

According to Cleveland Plain Dealer (Feb 9th 1975, Page 4-C), Carl Lombardo put up 1.3 Million Dollars for the Wepner-Ali Heavy Weight title Bout. According to a *Time* magazine article, "In Stitches", Ali was guaranteed \$1.5 million and Wepner signed for \$100,000. This was considerably more than Wepner had ever earned and he therefore did not need any coaxing. Wepner spent eight weeks near the Catskill Mountains under the guidance of Al Braverman (trainer and noted cutman) and Bill Prezant (manager). Prezant prophesied that the fight would be a big surprise. This bout was the first time Wepner had been able to train full-time.^[7] The fight was held on March 24 at the Richfield Coliseum in Richfield, Ohio south of Cleveland. Before the fight, a reporter asked Wepner if he thought he could survive in the ring with the champion, to which Wepner allegedly answered, "I've been a survivor my whole life...if I survived the Marines, I can survive Ali."

In the ninth round Wepner scored a knockdown, though Ali later contended that Wepner had stepped on his foot, a claim confirmed by photos.^[8] Wepner went to his corner and said to his manager, "Al, start the car. We're going to the bank. We are millionaires." To which Wepner's manager replied, "You better turn around. He's getting up and he looks pissed off."^[9]

In the remaining rounds, Ali decisively outboxed Wepner and opened up cuts above both Wepner's eyes and broke his nose. Wepner was far behind on the scorecards when Ali knocked him down with 19 seconds left in the 15th round. The referee counted to seven before calling a technical knockout.^[10]

Late career

In 1976, Wepner fought professional wrestler André the Giant and lost by countout after Andre threw him out of the ring.^{[11][12]}

Wepner's last fight was on May 2, 1978 for the New Jersey State Heavyweight Championship against a new rising prospect, Scott Frank, noted for a useful heavy left hook.^[13] Wepner lost the fight in a 12 round decision, but again proved durable, Ring magazine noted. He announced his retirement after the fight.^[14]

2.29.2 Later life

Wepner works today with his second wife Linda in the liquor store management field for Majestic Wines and Spirits in Carlstadt, New Jersey, and is an expert in consumer liquors, wines and spirits.^[15]

A film about Wepner's career was released in 2012,^[16] and ESPN aired a documentary titled 'The Real Rocky' on October 25, 2011.^[17] The ESPN film features a clip of Wepner's ninth round knockdown of Muhammad Ali in their 1975 world heavyweight title bout.^[18]

Ring appearances

Wepner occasionally makes ringside appearances at boxing cards in his home state of New Jersey, signing autographs and posing for photos with boxing fans. On October 12, 2012, Wepner appeared ringside with former World Light Heavyweight champion Mike Rossman in Atlantic City, New Jersey at a Tropicana Casino & Resort Atlantic City fight card featuring a WBA NABA Lightweight title bout in the main event. Wepner held the WBA NABA heavyweight title during his boxing career.

2.29.3 Rocky

Sylvester Stallone watched Wepner's fight against Ali and shortly afterwards wrote the script for *Rocky*, but Stallone subsequently denied that Wepner provided any inspiration for the movie.^{[19][20]} Wepner filed a lawsuit which was eventually settled with Stallone for an undisclosed amount.^[20]

It is speculated that the 1982 film *Rocky III* was influenced by his fight against Andre the Giant, as the movie features a match versus wrestler Hulk Hogan as "Thunderlips", who throws Rocky out of the ring.^{[19][21][22]}

2.29.4 In media and popular culture

- Liev Schreiber is playing the role of Wepner in a sports film, *The Bleeder*.^[23]

2.29.5 Professional boxing record

2.29.6 See also

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2.29.8 External links

- Professional boxing record for Chuck Wepner from BoxRec
- Interview with Chuck Wepner
- Chuck Wepner at the Internet Movie Database
- Datos y curiosidades sobre Chuck Wepner en español

2.30 Ron Lyle

Ronald "Ron" Lyle (February 12, 1941 – November 26, 2011) was an American professional boxer. He was known for his power punching, and for pleasing crowds with his courage and determination inside the ring. Lyle holds notable wins over Buster Mathis, Oscar Bonavena, Jimmy Ellis, Earnie Shavers, Joe Bugner and Scott LeDoux.

2.30.1 Early life

Lyle was one of 19 children born to William and Nellie Lyle of Denver, Colorado. He grew up on the Northeast side of the city, a predominantly African American area, in public housing projects.

During his time in Denver, Lyle was known to have associated with violent gangs. At 19, after dropping out of Manual High School, Lyle was convicted of second-degree murder in the shooting death of 21-year-old gang rival Douglas Byrd. Lyle argued he was being attacked with a lead pipe and was not the one who pulled the trigger.^[1]

He was sentenced to 15–25 years in the Colorado State Penitentiary. While in prison, Lyle nearly died on the operating table after being stabbed by an inmate. He was released after serving 7 1/2 years.^[2]

Lyle credited Lt. Cliff Mattax, the athletic director at the prison, with getting him interested in boxing. In his first match for the prison boxing team, Lyle was defeated by Texas Johnson. He never lost a prison boxing match again, however.

2.30.2 Amateur career

After prison, Lyle joined the Denver Elks Gym and started boxing for Bill Daniels. Lyle’s first amateur victory was a third round knockout over Fred Houpe (who would later be Leon Spinks's final opponent). His amateur career lasted only 14 months, and he compiled a record of 25–4 with 17 knockouts.^[3] He was the 1970 National AAU Heavyweight Champion, the 1970 North American Amateur Heavyweight Champion, and the 1970 International Boxing League Heavyweight Champion. Lyle was a member of the United States Boxing Team. He lost to Russian Ivan Alexi, but knocked out Russian heavyweight Kamo Saroyan in a match broadcast by ABC television’s Wide World of Sports.^[4]

2.30.3 Pro career

Lyle had a very late start in professional boxing. He turned professional under Bill Daniels, with trainer Bobby Lewis. His first fight was at the age of 30 in Denver,



Colorado, against A.J Staples, which he won by knockout in the second round. Lyle went on to post a 19–0 record with 17 knockouts, and became the 5th rated heavyweight contender. He scored impressive knockouts over notables Vicente Rondon, a light heavyweight champion; hulking Buster Mathis; and won by unanimous decision over former WBA Heavyweight Champion, Jimmy Ellis.^[5] Lyle's undefeated streak ended on a one-sided decision to veteran Jerry Quarry: the latter gave one of his career best performances using a boxer/puncher style to create openings first, gaining the initiative using his greater experience. Lyle then lost to Jimmy Young in 1975. In a later rematch, Young again edged Lyle and went on to outpoint George Foreman in 1977.

Lyle vs. Ali

On May 16, 1975 he was given an opportunity to face heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali, during Ali's second title defense in his second reign as champion. Lyle was the more aggressive fighter in the early rounds, with Ali conserving his energy and covering up in the center of the ring allowing Lyle to score. Lyle also showed restraint and did not respond to Ali's attempts at the rope-a-dope ploy. Though in danger of falling too far behind on points, Ali appeared to be in control of the pace of the fight, and picked his moments to score. The fight was close going into the 11th round, with Lyle winning on all three of the judges' score cards. Ali then hit Lyle with a strong right hand and followed with several flurrying punches, scoring. The referee stopped the fight, seeing that Lyle was unable to defend himself and Ali was punching him in

the head at will. Lyle's corner was not happy with the referee's decision.^{[6][7]}

Lyle vs. Foreman

Lyle is perhaps best known for a brawling fight in 1976 with Hall of Famer George Foreman. Foreman was making a comeback after suffering his first loss to Ali in the *Rumble in the Jungle*.

The fight is looked upon to this day as one of the most exciting and brutal in heavyweight history. Lyle took the offensive against the former champion and won the opening round. At one point he hit Foreman with a staggering body punch. After almost being knocked out in Round Two, Lyle amazed the crowd by flooring Foreman twice in the fourth round. Other than Muhammad Ali and Jimmy Young, Lyle was the only boxer to have ever knocked down George Foreman during a professional boxing match. Foreman later wrote in his autobiography that Lyle was the toughest man he ever fought. The former champion recovered and scored a knockout in the fifth round.

Lyle scored impressive victories over rated Jose Luis Garcia, and big names Oscar Bonavena and Earnie Shavers during his career.^[8] He also won a split decision over Joe Bugner, boring in with a thudding body attack in a fine contest.

According to George Foreman, Ron Lyle was one of the three hardest punchers he had faced in his career along with Gerry Cooney and Cleveland Williams.^[9]

Later career

The year 1979 marked a decline in Lyle's abilities. Draws with fringe contenders Stan Ward and Scott LeDoux were followed by a stunning one-punch loss to unheard-of Lynn Ball. Ball went on to match other names but never achieved similar success. *The Ring* magazine quoted Lyle as saying afterwards "No one does that to me."

He would return to the ring, however, but not for long. Ron retired again after a first-round knockout loss to then-rising star and undefeated power-hitting Gerry Cooney. By then, Lyle was 39 years old and his best years had gone.^[10]

Comeback

In 1995, at the age of 54, Lyle decided on a brief comeback. After scoring four quick knockouts over second-rate opponents, Lyle tried to get a rematch with George Foreman. The match was never made, however, and Lyle retired from boxing.^[11]

2.30.4 Retirement

While Lyle was working as a security guard in Las Vegas, Nevada, he was accused of another murder. He shot a man in his apartment who had spent time with him in the Colorado State Penitentiary. Lyle claimed self-defense and was found not guilty.^[12] A biography titled *Off the Ropes: the Ron Lyle Story* was written by Candace Toft and released by Scratching Shed Publishing in May 2010.^[13]

Lyle ran the boxing gym Denver Red Shield in Denver, Colorado.^[14] He was the former trainer of light welterweight contender Victor Ortiz, who fought out of Denver during some of his amateur career.^[15]

In 1992 Lyle trained a young promising talent from Las Vegas Nevada, Arash Hashemi,^[16] and under his mentorship Hashemi won two Golden Gloves championships.

2.30.5 Death

Lyle died at the age of 70, on Saturday November 26, 2011 from complications from a sudden stomach ailment.^[17] “We’re gonna miss Ron. He was a friend”, Earnie Shavers said. “He was the strongest man I have ever known, inside-and-out. When he gave advice, it was solid. He will never know how much I loved him. I will greatly miss him now that he is gone. I will never have a close friend like him again”, states Lisa Dawn Sheridan.

2.30.6 Lyle in the media and popular culture

Ron Lyle appeared in the film *Facing Ali*,^[18] a 2009 documentary, where he discusses his life and career. About his fight against Ali, when referee Fredy Nunez stopped the fight, he said “I couldn’t believe it, you know. I’m ahead on all scorecards. [...] Am I bitter? Forget about it. I never took it personal. If there don’t be no Ali, you think you’d be sitting here talking to Ron Lyle? About what?”^[19]

During this documentary he revealed that, during his stint in prison, where he received one meal a day consisting of a bowl of spinach, he passed time by doing up to 1,000 push-ups in an hour each day.

2.30.7 Professional boxing record

2.30.8 References

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2.30.9 External links

- Ron Lyle at the Internet Movie Database
- Professional boxing record for Ron Lyle from BoxRec
- Ron Lyle at *Find a Grave*

2.31 Jean-Pierre Coopman

Jean-Pierre Coopman (born in Ingelmunster, Belgium, 7 November 1946) is a retired Belgian boxer who is best known for his title fight against Muhammad Ali in 1976, which Ali won by KO^[1] in round 5.^[2]

2.31.1 Early life

Jean-Pierre Coopman was born on 11 July 1946, in the Flemish (northern Belgium) community of Ingelmunster. Early in life, he showed a gift for artistry. He was instructed in sculpting by his stepfather, and Coopman's first fully paid job was as a stone cutter. The stone-cutting he learned from childhood was more specifically that of an artisan. His skills were put to use, among other things, in reparations of the medieval churches of Belgium—most notably, *Saint Nicholas' Church in Ghent*. By having to perform a kind of historic preservation, using and applying tools from this ancient period, Coopman developed great strength in his arms and hands.

In young adulthood, he appears to have been a lover of night-life, but after sparring several times with Gilbert Montagne, a noted Belgian middleweight, Coopman was urged to pursue a ring career, or at least to try. By his own words, once the decision was made, Coopman at least gave up smoking, and cold turkey at that.



Jean-Pierre Coopman (left), the producer of Camping Cosmos in the middle and Freddy De Kerpel (right) during the shooting of the movie Camping Cosmos, August 1995, Westende, Belgium.

2.31.2 Fighting career

Though best known in fight circles as an opponent of Muhammad Ali, Coopman had been fighting for a half decade, before being granted his title shot at “The Greatest”. He began in the amateur ranks, rising quickly enough to compete in the 1971 European Championships, where he was knocked out by a far more experienced (315 fights) Soviet fighter. He turned professional, in 1972.

Coopman fought his early bouts primarily in Belgium, though he is recorded as having lost an early match versus Harald Skog, in Oslo, Norway. Another, more tenuous connection to Ali, is Coopman's loss (via decision) to Rudie Lubbers of The Netherlands, in 1973. Coopman's earlier record, as well shows a disqualification victory over Terry Daniels, who had also received a title shot during his own career, versus Smokin' Joe Frazier, in Jan-

uary 1972. Despite mixed fortunes, Coopman proved popular with his fellow Belgians, and by 1975, was able to pursue boxing as a full-time career; the company which employed him to sculpt, now paid him to fight, instead.

It has often been said of Coopman, that he was one of the least deserving fighters to fight for the heavyweight title. His fight with Ali was regarded as a glorified sparring session. Ali had recently had his third fight with Joe Frazier, the “Thrilla in Manila”, a match Ali later called, “the closest thing to Death.” Understandably, the champion wanted an “easy” opponent. The match was made almost by happenstance, as the promotion fell to George Kanter, a Belgian by birth. Kanter, after surveying the European scene, contacted Charles de Jager, Coopman's manager, and shortly on, the match was made. Coopman, unknown outside Belgium, was overwhelmed by the sudden notoriety. Ali, he has always admitted, was a personal hero; from the beginning, he was grateful for the opportunity.

Coopman was dubbed “The Lion of Flanders” by the Western press, but he never called himself that, nor had ever used the moniker. The sobriquet, was thought to be apropos in light of Coopman's birthday (11 July is a national holiday in Flanders, marking a military victory over the French, in 1302). The challenger looked bad enough in sparring sessions, his training was quickly closed to the press.

The fight took place in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on 20 February 1976 at Roberto Clemente Coliseum; the fight was not in any way broadcast by Belgian media as Coopman's native land was the first nation to ban boxing broadcasts. In those days long before Pay-Per-View, CBS Sports broadcast the bout to the USA for free, prime time. The bout itself, little more than a day in the gym for Ali, ended in Round Five. Though stopped, Coopman has always felt it a point of pride, that he emerged relatively unhurt and unmarked.

After the Muhammad Ali fight, Coopman became European champion after beating the Basque, Jose Urtain. Two months later, in Antwerp, he lost the title to Lucien Rodriguez of France. He retired in 1980. His last official fight was against *Cookie Wallace*.

In 1995 he fought another boxing legend, Freddy De Kerpel, acting in the film *Camping Cosmos*.

As of 2007 Coopman was painting oil paintings of famous boxers. He had, long before that time, painted a portrait of Ali, taken by way of visual reference, from a celebrated photo by Neil Leifer. He was also awarded the contract to sculpt a statue of Cyril Delannoit, a Belgian fighter acclaimed in his day, for having defeated Marcel Cerdan (1948; Brussels).

Coopman is the subject of “Lion”, a tongue-in-cheek tribute by songwriter Freddy Blohm.

2.31.3 Professional boxing record

2.31.4 References

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- [2] Brunt, Stephen (2002). *Facing Ali*. Guilford, Connecticut: The Lyons Press. p. 301. ISBN 1-58574-829-3.
- [3] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=16595&cat=boxer

2.32 Jimmy Young

Jimmy Young (November 14, 1948 – February 20, 2005) was a top American boxer who had his greatest success in the heavyweight division during the mid 1970s, most notably when he beat **George Foreman** and lost a disputed decision against **Muhammad Ali**. He fought many significant fighters of his era, including twice out-pointing **Ron Lyle** and losing only by a split decision to no 1 contender **Ken Norton** in a title eliminator.

2.32.1 Professional career

Early fights

Inexperienced in only his 11th professional fight, Young was matched against contender **Earnie Shavers**, who had a 42-2 record at the time and suffered his first KO loss. Young had tried trading blows and been caught by one of the divisions hardest punchers early on.^[1] Shavers was infamous for his overwhelming early attacks. They would rematch however.

After this Young learnt fast and went undefeated for three years which included a win over contender **Ron Lyle** and a controversial draw in a re-match with **Earnie Shavers** (many observers scored the bout for Young).^[2] It would not be the last time Young lost a decision in a big fight. He had worked better on defense against this known devastating hitter. It was still enough to earn him a title fight with Heavyweight Champion of the World **Muhammad Ali**.

The Young-Ali fight

Young made his name globally and with the public when he fought **Muhammad Ali** in Landover, Maryland in April 1976 for the world heavyweight title, although boxing circles had already noted his ability. Ali weighed in at 230 pounds, the highest for any of his fights up to that point (he would weigh 236.25 pounds in his fight against **Trevor Berbick**), and was consequently slow and immobile throughout the bout. Seven years younger and 21

pounds lighter, Young adopted a strategy of fighting aggressively from a distance, landing numerous light blows while dodging and parrying Ali's counterpunches, and using his body blows, which had little power behind them but were effective at scoring points. At close quarters, Young would turn passive. He retreated whenever possible, and often kept his head ducked very low to avoid serious blows when Ali would fight from the inside.

On several occasions when Ali was inside and Young had his back to the ropes, Young would intentionally put his head or upper body out of the ring to compel the referee to separate the fighters. To some, Young's was a brilliant strategy of neutralizing his opponent's strengths and forcing the bout to be fought on his own terms, exposing Ali's inability to fight a counterpuncher. To others, it seemed cowardly as he forced a stoppage to the fight every time Ali held the advantage.

The referee did at one point during the fight initiate a count due to Jimmy Young being outside the ropes. The fight went the full 15 rounds with a controversial one-sided unanimous decision going to Ali. Referee Tom Kelly scored it 72-65; judges Larry Barrett and Terry Moore had it 70-68 and 71-64, respectively.^[3]

Ken Norton (a rival of Ali) who was commentating at ringside had the fight even on his own scorecard. Lester Bromberg (former *Ring magazine* editor) called the decision a "travesty". *New York Daily News* reporter Dick Young said: "[Ali won] by the grace of three hero worshipping fight officials. I believe many people, the voting officials among them, refuse to believe what they see when one of their super-heroes doesn't function as expected." As the fight was televised, many viewers called to the network to complain about the decision. Even Ali's ever loyal trainer Angelo Dundee went on record as saying this was the champion's "worst fight". Afterwards, many started calling on Ali to retire.^[4] Some claimed that Young's performance should have earned him a rematch. The WBC for one agreed this and set about organising it in 1977 as below.

Rematch Lyle and then George Foreman

In November 1976 Young in a rematch again clearly beat heralded contender **Ron Lyle** by using clever defense and fast offensive styles. On one judge's card winning 11 of all 12 rounds.

In March 1977, Young then fought **George Foreman** in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Foreman was on his own 5-0-0 comeback after losing the title to Muhammad Ali in "The Rumble in the Jungle", including victories over top contenders Ron Lyle and Joe Frazier.

The Young-Foreman fight was somewhat steady until the sixth round. The early rounds were punctuated by complaints from Young and his corner about the use of elbows by Foreman, which was punished by the referee by

a point deduction. For the first half of the fight, Young used his somewhat unorthodox boxing skills and good defense to keep out of harms way, while using his punching speed to counter. In the sixth round he became somewhat more aggressive himself and landed a number of clean punches on Foreman.^[5] Eleven seconds into the seventh round, Foreman caught Young with a left-handed body punch, and immediately followed with a powerful swinging left hand to the head. Young reeled and turned away and seemed about to go down, while Foreman tried to pursue his advantage, but somehow Young survived to the end of the round. In his after-match comments on TV, he described it as 'desperation'. But Young rallied, and landed a number of good punches of his own, as Foreman's eyes became puffy and his punches lost their menace. For the rest of the contest, Foreman continued to move forward, trying to cut off the ring and looking for the big knock out, while taking punches from the elusive Young. Finally Young even managed a knockdown over Foreman in the last round, and earned a unanimous win by 12-round decision. *Ring Magazine* named the Young-Foreman bout its 1977 "Fight of the Year". Jimmy Young joined Ali in being the only two men to ever beat a peak George Foreman in over 40 contests.

The Young-Norton eliminator Fight

Now the number 2 contender, Young's next opponent in November 1977 was in a big mandatory world title eliminator against **Ken Norton** the number 1 contender - Jimmy had won five straight since his loss to Ali, including another unanimous decision over **Ron Lyle**. Young lost the Norton match on a controversial split decision in which many observers watching in attendance felt Young should have been declared the winner in a clever fight from both boxers in Las Vegas. While Young boxed, cleverly drawing Norton onto useful sneak right hands, Norton himself pressed forward dangerously, always his best style, using a heavy two-handed attack pounding away to the ribs, then lobbing wicked head shots. The two had sparred when Ken trained for his second Ali match,^[6] and Norton had found shots thrown first to the head rarely landed so this gave him the tactic's idea.^[7] The fight was set at 15 rounds, unheard of for a non-title match but it was due to its importance as an eliminator (and later retro-designated as a WBC title match). It attracted big money and Ali himself was ringside. The winner of the fight, Norton, was later awarded the **WBC** championship belt as the mandatory title defence didn't materialise when **Leon Spinks** (who had taken the title from Ali in an upset win on February 15, 1978) chose a rematch against Ali instead of fighting Norton for the WBC-title.

The slide; Ocasio twice

Demoralised at having lost another close decision, Young went on a gradual downward spiral. In June 1978 *You're*

only as good as your last fight, boxing's old saying seemed to apply. Poor conditioning, an increasing problem, let him be outpointed to prospect **Ossie Ocasio**. Whilst better in a direct rematch, early 1979, Ocasio again showing talent edged the win and went on to fight the world champion **Larry Holmes**.

Later career

He won a short 3 round brutal battle with unranked **Wendell Bailey**, flashes of old form. But other matches of note; Young was stopped 'on cuts' to new heavyweight contender **Gerry Cooney** after 4 rounds in an about evens match. He'd also lost on points to another rising prospect and future heavyweight champion **Michael Dokes**. In the 1979 Dokes match Young had scaled 229 lbs, around 15Lbs overweight, it was a near career heaviest and he was simply way out of shape untrained.

But slimmed down again he later in the same year December 1979 outpointed British champion **John L. Gardiner** effectively, even decking Gardiner in the 10th. That and the **Marvin Stinson** and **Jeff Sims** matches were probably his last notable wins.

Biography

Young's biography was published in 1979, *Jimmy Young, Heavyweight Challenger* by **Edward Dolan** and **Richard Lytle**, Doubleday pub, ISBN 0-385-14097-5.

Comeback chance

Young began a comeback, going 5-0-0 including a TKO over previously unbeaten **Gordon Racette**. In 1982, Young's comeback was cut short when he was defeated on points by future champion **Greg Page**. He became a "trial horse" for emerging contenders, dropping decisions to more future champions in **Tony Tucker** and **Tony Tubbs**. He continued fighting with mixed results until 1988.

2.32.2 Later years and death

After his boxing career, Young had financial, drug, and legal problems. During a court hearing on a drug possession charge, it was argued by his Philadelphia public defender that Young had symptoms of chronic traumatic brain injury (due to the sport).^[8] At a boxing celebrity event ring magazine noted Young was helped about by family.

Young died on February 20, 2005 of a heart attack, after six days in the hospital, aged only 56.

2.32.3 Professional boxing record

2.32.4 References

- [1] His biography, as detailed in article itself below
- [2] <http://www.thesweetscience.com/boxing-article/1752/jimmy-young-career-worth-remembering/>
- [3] http://www.boxrec.com/boxer_display.php?boxer_id=000276
- [4] <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=A7-hzOuI2KQC&dat=19760501&printsec=frontpage>
- [5] Video on YouTube
- [6] Howard Cosell 1977 commentary on utube
- [7] Utube Young fight commentary
- [8] "Jimmy Young, 56, Fighter Who Beat Foreman but Lost to Ali, Is Dead". The Associated Press. February 24, 2005. Retrieved 8 November 2011.
- [9] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=00276&cat=boxer

2.32.5 External links

- Professional boxing record for Jimmy Young from BoxRec
- Jimmy Young at *Find a Grave*

2.33 Richard Dunn

Richard Dunn (19 January 1945) was born in **Halifax**, West Riding of Yorkshire, England^[1] and was a heavyweight boxer who fought **Muhammad Ali** for the world heavyweight title in 1976.

Dunn was defeated by many top boxers of the time, losing to Muhammad Ali, Joe Bugner, Jimmy Young and Kallie Knoetze. However, he did defeat some professional fighters such as Johnny Griffin, Neville Meade, Bunny Johnson and Danny McAlinden.

A southpaw, Dunn's professional career began with a win over Cardiff fighter Del Phillips in a heavyweight eliminator competition in Mayfair, London in July 1969. His second fight was on the same day in the semi-final, a first round defeat against Danny McAlinden, who dispatched all three of his opponents in under three rounds to win the competition. However, in May 1973 Dunn defeated Billy Aird on points in an eliminator for the British Heavyweight Championship at Grosvenor House in London. He lost the final eliminator against Bunny Johnson in October after a tenth round knockout at the King's Hall in Manchester. However, when he faced the same opponent at the Empire Pool at Wembley for both the British and



Richard Dunn Sports Centre, Odsal Top, Bradford

Commonwealth titles in September 1975, he prevailed on points after 15 rounds.

He made his first defence against McAlinden just two months later. However, this time it was Dunn that won with a knockout after McAlinden went down three times in the second round. After winning the European Heavyweight title with a third round TKO OF Bernd August in April 1976, he was given the chance of fighting for the **WBC** and **WBA** titles against Ali in **Munich, Germany**, for which he received £52,000^[2] (based on increases in average earnings, this would be approximately £472,500 in 2011).^[3]

Dunn is also notable as the only Yorkshireman ever to fight Ali, who knocked him out 2:05 minutes into the fifth round; this was to be the last knockout Ali ever achieved in his professional career. Although he was seriously overmatched, many British fans have said that Dunn made one of the most courageous showings of any British fighter when he faced Ali. Dunn was knocked down five times in five rounds. After the fight, Muhammad Ali promised the gloves he had used in the fight to British promoter **Mickey Duff**, who was raising funds for **Chris Finnegan**, a terrific fighter who had lost sight in one eye. When he passed his gloves to Duff's PR **Norman Giller** in the ring, Ali told Giller to look inside. In one it was written 'Ali wins' and in the other 'round five'. Dunn lost his next fight to **Joe Bugner**, surrendering all his titles in a stunning first round knockout and retired after his next fight, a fifth round defeat to big hitting **Kallie Knoetze** in the Ellis Park Tennis Stadium in **Johannesburg**.

A sports centre is named after Dunn in his home town of Bradford in honour of his achievements.^[4] Richard Dunn is now retired and living in Scarborough. On TV in around 2005 he explained serious injuries he received from an unfortunate accident whilst working on an oil rig.^[5]

2.33.1 Professional boxing record

2.33.2 References

- [1] “Richard Dunn”. *Boxing Stats*. Retrieved 10 November 2011.
- [2] “For fighting Muhammad Ali I got £52,000 says Richard Dunn but David Haye will get millions against useless lumps - and good luck to him”. London: dailymail.co.uk. 31 December 2012. Retrieved 1 January 2013.
- [3] “Measuring Worth - Relative Value of UK Pounds”. Measuring Worth. 31 December 2012. Retrieved 1 January 2013.
- [4] Bradford Metropolitan District Council | Sports and Leisure facilities | Richard Dunn Sports Centre
- [5] “For fighting Muhammad Ali I got £52,000 says Richard Dunn but David Haye will get millions against useless lumps - and good luck to him”. *Daily Mail* (London).
- [6] Richard Dunn - Boxer

2.33.3 External links

- Professional boxing record for Richard Dunn from BoxRec

2.34 Alfredo Evangelista

For the Filipino anthropologist, see Alfredo E. Evangelista.

Alfredo Evangelista (born December 3, 1954) is a former Uruguayan boxer. He was born in Montevideo, Uruguay.^[1] Evangelista has resided in Spain for a very large portion of his life.

“The Lynx of Montevideo” Evangelista faced Muhammad Ali in a bout for the world heavyweight championship in 1977, losing by unanimous decision in 15 rounds.^[1] He also fought against Larry Holmes for the World Boxing Council title in 1978, and lost by knockout in the seventh round.^[2]

2.34.1 Professional boxing record

2.34.2 References

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- [2] “Holmes knocks out Evangelista to retain WBC title”. *The Montreal Gazette*. Associated Press. 1978-11-11. Retrieved 2010-08-14.
- [3] http://boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=367&cat=boxer&pageID=1

2.34.3 External links

- Professional boxing record for Alfredo Evangelista from BoxRec

2.35 Earnie Shavers

Earnie Dee Shaver (born August 31, 1944), best known as **Earnie Shavers**, is an American former professional boxer and two-time world heavyweight title challenger. He is considered by most boxing experts to be the hardest-punching knockout artist of all time, and he scored 24 first-round knockouts; included in this list are world heavyweight champions Jimmy Ellis and Ken Norton. Shavers is best known for his fights with Larry Holmes and Muhammad Ali; despite losing these contests, he did score a heavy knockdown against Holmes, and had Ali badly hurt in the second round as well as during the final rounds of their fight.^[1]

2.35.1 Amateur career

Prior to turning professional, Shavers had a short but notable amateur career. He was the 1969 National AAU Heavyweight champion.

2.35.2 Early professional career

Known as the “Black Destroyer,” Shavers compiled an impressive record, winning 44 of his first 47 fights by knockout; mostly against unremarkable opposition. His KO streak included 27 consecutive knockouts, of which 20 victories were in the first round. He suffered setbacks with losses to Ron Stander and Stan Johnson.

He began to rise through the ranks of the heavyweight division after he hired a Cleveland-based promoter and ex-con named Don King to be his manager. His wins included a novice Jimmy Young who would later become a top contender. Stepping up the class of opposition, he came to public prominence with a first round KO of one time WBA heavyweight champion Jimmy Ellis. His progress was halted when he was KO'd in the first round by Jerry Quarry which was followed by another loss to a journeyman Bob Stallings. Shavers then had a thunderous match with hard hitting Ron Lyle but was stopped after 6 brutal rounds. He then knocked out hard hitter Howard King and beat Roy Williams in a back and forward battle in which Shavers was nearly knocked out. The latter Shavers always said was one of the toughest of his whole career.

Shavers vs Ali

Shavers fought **Muhammad Ali** at **Madison Square Garden** on September 29, 1977.^[2] Coming into the bout, Shavers had a record of 54-5-1, with 52 knockouts. Ali nicknamed Shavers “The Acorn” because of his shaved bald head, unlike early appearances. The fight was shown in prime time broadcast television by NBC, which rarely did prime time fights (ABC tended to get the Ali fights) and had the judges’ scoring announced after each round to help avoid any controversial decision. Ali’s cornerman **Angelo Dundee** had a crony (Baltimore matchmaker Eddie Hrica) in the dressing room watching the broadcast, and would get signals from his friend on the scoring. In the second round, Shavers hurt Ali badly with an overhand right. Ali exaggerated his motions enough that it seemed he might be play acting and Shavers hesitated. On the scorecard they exchanged rounds. Ali won the fifth decisively. To win the fight Ali had to survive the last three rounds. Shavers, whose stamina was suspect before the fight, came alive in the 13th round. In the 14th, he battered Ali about the ring. Before the 15th, (according to the story by *Sports Illustrated’s* great boxing writer Pat Putnam) “Ali was on very wobbly legs.”

Realizing Ali needed to last three more minutes, Dundee told him, “You don’t look so good. You better go out and take this round.” In a furious final round, the two men tagged each other, but Ali closed strongly, nearly dropping Shavers in the last 20 seconds. He won a unanimous decision. The next day, Garden Match Maker Teddy Brenner encouraged Ali to retire by stating the Garden would never make another offer to host an Ali fight. Brenner also thought that Shavers deserved the nod against Ali. The fight made the cover of *Sports Illustrated*, with “ALI’S DESPERATE HOUR” featuring a photograph of Shavers scoring with an overhand right.^[3] Fight doctor **Ferdie Pacheco** also urged Ali to retire after noting the damage Ali had absorbed against Shavers. Ali later said Shavers was the hardest puncher he ever faced, famously stating “Earnie hit me so hard, it shook my kinfolk back in Africa” although Ali had previously used this amusing punch line in reference to various other hard hitting opponents.^[4]

Shavers v Norton/Holmes

In a mandatory title challenge eliminator he knocked out former champion and Ali beater **Ken Norton** in the first round, possibly the best win of his career.

Shavers then fought for the title against skilled champion **Larry Holmes** at **Caesars Palace** in **Pardise** on September 29, 1979, exactly two years after his defeat by Ali. Shavers knocked Holmes down in round seven but was himself knocked out in round eleven after taking punishment. Holmes, known for his ability to take a punch, later said that Shavers’ blow was the hardest he had ever taken in his career.

Later career

The Holmes bout was the last big match for Shavers. In 1980, he was knocked out in the seventh round by durable prospect **Randall “Tex” Cobb**. He never again fought for the world title. In 1982 he fought **Joe Bugner**, also on the comeback trail. Bugner was knocked down in the first but was stopped by cuts in the second round.

Shavers continued to fight professionally for several years, retiring in 1995 after losing to **Brian Yates**. Many thought he should have retired after his upset loss to lower contender **Bernardo Mercado**. Shavers suffered a similar retinal eye injury as boxer **Sugar Ray Leonard**.

2.35.3 Fighting style

Shavers was a heavy-handed puncher who stalked his opponents, setting them up for his thunderous right, which was responsible for many of his knockouts. At times lacking grace and accuracy, Earnie had a reputation for exhausting himself before round 7. Critics remarked he rarely won a bout that went beyond 8 rounds. In subsequent fights he fought Ali well for 15 rounds and Holmes for 11. Earnie would throw punches against any legal area he could reach, exposed or covered, relying on his tremendous power to wear down his opponents and exploiting any opening. His fighting stance produced a short and powerful image. His chin was his weakness. He could “box” as well as slug. Notably, he injured his right hand early in a 10 round match against rated fighter **Henry Clark** and then nearly jabbed **Clarke’s** head off, beating him at his own game as it were, to win on points.

Video and book

Shavers published a video of highlights of his career in 1992 titled *Earnie D. Shavers, The hardest One-Punch Hitter*, and later an autobiography.

2.35.4 Life after boxing

Shavers retired in 1983 after retinal problems were discovered. After retirement, he became an ordained **Christian** minister and moved to **Phoenix**, where he preached for many years. He moved to **England** to pastor a church there in the early 2000s. He has been on the **Benny Hinn** TV show several times.

During the early 1980s while preparing for the feature film *Rocky III*, **Sylvester Stallone** explored the possibility of using a real heavyweight boxer in the role of **James “Clubber” Lang** by inviting Earnie Shavers to spar with him. Shavers initially refused to hit Stallone with anything other than a soft jab. This frustrated Stallone, who asked Shavers, “C’mon Earnie, show me something real.” Earnie responded by punching him once near the liver,

forcing an immediate retirement; Stallone later said: “that nearly killed me. I went straight to the men’s room and threw up”.^[5]

Shavers has visited Ali several times and he says he, Ali, and George Foreman have become very good friends over the years. Shavers accepted the invitation of the Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International^[6] to preach at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester.

Earnie also works in Liverpool in the UK, as head of security at Hannahs’ bar, where he is very much respected. The staff of Hannah’s bar say that he does not work there now. Until five years ago (2009) he worked at Yates’ Wine Lodge in Liverpool “meeting and greeting”. On occasion Shavers was a troubleshooting referee in professional wrestling after his retirement.

He is also a Patron of The Shannon Bradshaw Trust,^[7] a children’s charity based in Warrington, Cheshire, helping children with life-threatening conditions, and their families.

Earnie speaks to pupils at Barr Beacon Language College in Walsall. Earnie also gave a speech 26 February 2008 at The Streetly School in Walsall, which was based upon helping kids make the right decisions in life.

2.35.5 Personal life

Shavers was married to Laverne Payne and has five daughters from their union, Tamara, Cynthia, Catherine, Carla, and Amy. He also has four daughters from other unions, Catherine, Lisa, Natasha and Latonya. He has 24 grandchildren. He worked at General Motors in Lordstown, Ohio in the late 1960s. Shavers made a guest appearance on the Irish TV programme *The Late Late Show* hosted by Ron Lyle where the two fighters discussed their previous bout that had happened a month earlier. Shavers was a frequent visitor to the pub “Roddy Bolands” in Dublin. There is a signed picture of Shavers drinking a pint of Guinness on the wall there.

2.35.6 Comeback

Shavers made a short comeback in the late 1980s and early 1990s. After a few wins and losses he retired in 1995 after being KO’d by Brian Yates in round 2.

In 2003, Shavers was ranked number 10 among boxing’s greatest punchers in history by *Ring Magazine*. Within the sport of boxing, he is widely considered to be the hardest puncher of all time.

Shavers finished his career in 1995 with a record of 74 wins (68 by knockout, 23 inside the first round), 14 losses and 1 draw.

2.35.7 Professional boxing record

2.35.8 References

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- [3] Keown, Tim (2012-01-17). “70 reasons to celebrate Muhammad Ali”. *ESPN*. Retrieved 2012-01-17.
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- [6] Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International FGBMFI UK & Ireland empower men for life
- [7] Shannon Bradshaw Trust
- [8] http://www.boxrec.com/list_bouts.php?human_id=000320&cat=boxer

2.35.9 External links

- Muhammad Ali vs Ernie Shavers, Sept. 29, 1977 on YouTube.
- Professional boxing record for Earnie Shavers from BoxRec
- Statistical analysis of the KO record of Earnie Shavers

2.36 Leon Spinks

Leon Spinks (born July 11, 1953) is an American former boxer who was the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. Spinks had an overall record of 26 wins, 17 losses and three draws as a professional, with 14 of those wins by knockout. In only his eighth professional bout, Spinks won the undisputed world heavyweight championship when he beat Muhammad Ali on February 15, 1978, in what was considered one of the biggest upsets in boxing history. However, he was stripped of the WBC title for fighting Ali in an unapproved rematch seven months later, which he lost by a 15-round unanimous decision. Besides being heavyweight champion and his characteristic gap-toothed grin (due to losing two and later all four of his front teeth), Spinks gained notoriety for the disaster which befell his career following the loss to Ali.^[1]

Prior to turning professional, Spinks won a bronze medal at the inaugural 1974 World Amateur Boxing Championships in Havana. Two years later, he capped off

his amateur career by winning a gold medal in the light heavyweight division at the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal, alongside his brother **Michael Spinks**, who won the gold at middleweight. Leon defeated Cuban great Sixto Soria in an entertaining slugfest where Spinks was rocked several times by the much more polished fighter but landed a crushing overhand right that put Soria face down on the canvas. His Olympic teammates included **Sugar Ray Leonard**, **Leo Randolph** and **Howard Davis Jr.** Spinks also served on active duty in the **United States Marine Corps** from 1973 to 1976.

2.36.1 Professional career

Spinks debuted professionally on January 15, 1977 in Las Vegas, Nevada, beating Bob Smith by knockout in five rounds. His next fight was in Liverpool, England, where he beat Peter Freeman by a first round knockout. Later, he saw an improvement in opposition quality, when he fought Pedro Agosto of Puerto Rico and knocked him out in round one. He then fought Scott LeDoux to a draw and defeated Italian champion Alfio Righetti by a decision.

First Ali match

Now a lower ranked contender, he made history on February 15, 1978, by beating **Muhammad Ali** on a 15-round split decision in Las Vegas. Spinks won the world heavyweight title in his eighth professional fight, the shortest time in history. The aging Ali had expected an easy fight, but he was out-boxed by Spinks, who did not tire throughout the bout. It was one of the few occasions when Ali left the ring with a bruised and puffy face.

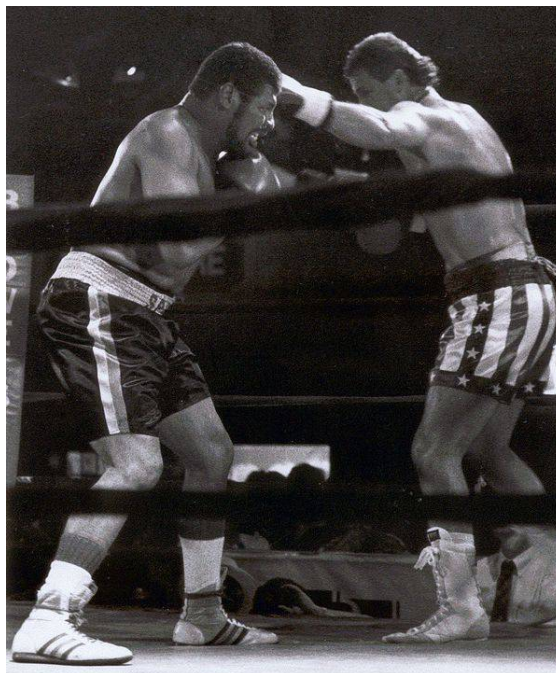
Spinks' victory over Ali was the peak of his career. He was the only man to take a title from Muhammad Ali in the ring, as Ali's other losses were non-title contests or bouts where Ali was the challenger. Spinks' gap-toothed grin was featured on the cover of the February 19, 1978 issue of *Sports Illustrated*.

However, Spinks was stripped of his world title by the WBC for refusing to defend it against **Ken Norton**, instead agreeing to a return bout against Ali to defend his WBA crown. The title, stripped from Spinks, was then awarded to Norton.

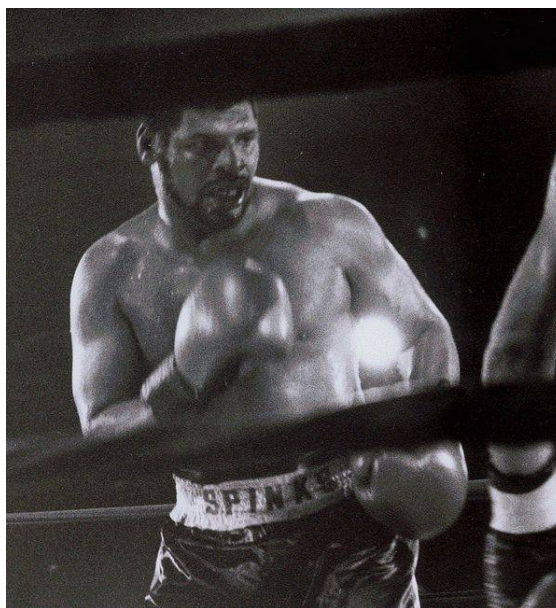
The Ali rematch

His second match with Ali, at the Louisiana Superdome on September 15, 1978, went badly for Spinks. A now in-shape Ali—with better sharper tactics—rarely lost control, winning back his title by a unanimous fifteen-round decision. Ali regained the title, becoming the first three-time heavyweight champion.

Career development



Spinks defeats Ray Kipping June 19, 1995, St. Louis



Spinks during his final victory held at the "Little bit of Texas" in St. Louis

Spinks's next fight, his only one in 1979, was at Monte Carlo, where he was knocked out in the first round by future WBA world heavyweight champion **Gerrie Coetzee**. In the following fight, Spinks defeated former world title challenger and European title holder **Alfredo Evangelista** by a knockout in round 5. He fought to a draw in with **Eddie López**, and beat the WBC's top-ranked challenger, **Bernardo Mercado**, by a knockout in round nine.

The Holmes title fight

His strong performance against Mercado earned Spinks a title match against **Larry Holmes**. In Spinks' only fight in 1981, and what would be his last chance opportunity at the heavyweight title, he had a clear loss by a TKO in the third round at Joe Louis Arena in Detroit on June 12.

Changes weight division

It was Spinks' last heavyweight bout for years, as he began boxing in the cruiserweight division. He beat contender Ivy Brown by a decision in ten rounds, and a gained a decision against former and future title challenger **Jesse Burnett** in twelve rounds.

When his brother Michael Spinks defeated Larry Holmes in a controversial upset for the IBF heavyweight championship in 1985, they became the only brothers to have held world heavyweight championships. They kept the distinction until the **Klitschko brothers** became champions a decade later.

In the 1980s Leon Spinks competed in several boxer vs. wrestler matches in **New Japan Pro Wrestling**, including losing by submission to **Antonio Inoki**. In 1986 Spinks earned his last championship opportunity, fighting **Dwight Muhammad Qawi** for the WBA cruiserweight championship. Qawi had been defeated by Michael Spinks three years earlier for his WBC light heavyweight championship. However, Leon Spinks lost by TKO in the sixth round. During the fight, Qawi taunted Spinks as he beat him mercilessly in a corner.

Spinks boxed for another eight years with mixed results. In 1994 he lost a bout by KO to John Carlo, the first time a former heavyweight champion had lost to a boxer making his pro debut (promoter Charles Farrell later admitted to falsifying Carlo's record in order to get the fight sanctioned by the District of Columbia).^[2] Spinks retired at age 42, after losing an 8 round decision to Fred Houpe in 1995, who was coming off a seventeen-year hiatus.

2.36.2 Professional boxing record

2.36.3 Amateur career

- 1974, 1975, and 1976 National AAU light heavyweight champion
- Defeated future champion **Michael Dokes** for first AAU title in 1974

Olympic results

- Defeated **Abellatif Fatihi** (Morocco) KO 1
- Defeated **Anatoly Klimanov** (Soviet Union) 5-0

- Defeated **Ottomar Sachse** (East Germany) 5-0
- Defeated **Janusz Gortat** (Poland) 5-0
- Defeated **Sixto Soria** (Cuba) RSC 3

2.36.4 After boxing

During the 1990s, Spinks worked for **Frontier Martial-Arts Wrestling**, winning its world title in 1992 making him the only man to hold titles in both boxing and wrestling.^[4] In the late 1990s, Spinks was a headliner on year-round, touring autograph shows.

In 2009 Spinks was featured as part of the 2009 documentary *Facing Ali*, in which notable former opponents of Ali speak about how fighting Ali changed their lives.

As of 2012, Spinks lives in **Columbus, Nebraska**. He told a reporter his life is "comfortable", and that he keeps a low profile.^[5]

"I love helping the kids," he says. He loves being a hero to them and he also still loves working a room.^[6]

2.36.5 Personal life

His son, **Cory Spinks**, held the undisputed welterweight title and was the **International Boxing Federation Junior Middleweight** champion in 2006–2008.

In 1990, his son, **Leon Calvin**, was shot to death in East St. Louis as he was driving home from his girlfriend's house. Leon Calvin, 19, was a light heavyweight boxer who had turned pro the month before his murder.

2.36.6 See also

- List of heavyweight boxing champions
- List of WBC world champions
- Notable boxing families

2.36.7 References

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2.36.9 External links

- Professional boxing record for Leon Spinks from BoxRec
- Leon Spinks' Amateur Boxing Record

2.37 Larry Holmes

For the politician and activist, see [Larry Holmes \(activist\)](#).

Larry Holmes (born November 3, 1949) is an American former professional boxer. He grew up in Easton, Pennsylvania, which gave birth to his boxing nickname, the "Easton Assassin".

Holmes, whose left jab is rated among the best in boxing history,^[1] was the WBC heavyweight champion from 1978 to 1983, *The Ring* magazine champion from 1980 to 1985, and the IBF champion from 1983 to 1985. He made 20 successful title defenses,^{[2][3]} placing him third all time, behind only Joe Louis at 25 and Wladimir Klitschko at 22. He is also one of only five men—along with Joe Frazier, Ken Norton, Leon Spinks and Trevor Berbick—to defeat Muhammad Ali.

Holmes won his first 48 professional bouts, including victories over Earnie Shavers, Ken Norton, Muhammad Ali, Mike Weaver, Gerry Cooney, Tim Witherspoon, Carl Williams and Marvis Frazier, and fell one short of matching Rocky Marciano's career record of 49–0 when he lost to Michael Spinks in 1985. Holmes retired after losing a rematch to Spinks, but made repeated comebacks, and was unsuccessful in three further attempts (against Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield and Oliver McCall) to regain the title, the last in 1995. Holmes fought for the final time in 2002 and ended with a career record of 69–6.^[4] He is frequently ranked as one of the greatest heavyweights of all time^[5] and has been inducted into both the International Boxing Hall of Fame and World Boxing Hall of Fame.

2.37.1 Early life

Holmes was the fourth of twelve children born to John and Flossie Holmes. When the family moved to Easton in 1954, Holmes' father went to Connecticut, where he worked as a gardener until his death in 1970. He visited

his family every three weeks. "He didn't forsake us," said Flossie Holmes. "He just didn't have anything to give." The family survived on welfare.

To help support his family Holmes dropped out of school when he was in the seventh grade and went to work at a car wash for \$1 an hour. He later drove a dump truck and worked in a quarry.^[6]

2.37.2 Amateur boxing career

When Holmes was nineteen, he started boxing. In his twenty-second bout, he boxed Duane Bobick in the 1972 Olympic Trials. Holmes was dropped in the first round with a right to the head. He got up and danced out of range, landing several stiff jabs in the process. Bobick mauled Holmes in the second round but couldn't corner him. The referee warned Holmes twice in the second for holding. In the third, Bobick landed several good rights and started to corner Holmes who continued to hold. Eventually, Holmes was disqualified for excessive holding.^[7]

2.37.3 Early boxing career

After compiling an amateur record of 19–3, Holmes turned professional on March 21, 1973, winning a four-round decision against Rodell Dupree. Early in his career he worked as a sparring partner for Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, Earnie Shavers, and Jimmy Young. He was paid well and learned a lot. "I was young, and I didn't know much. But I was holding my own sparring those guys," Holmes said. "I thought, 'hey, these guys are the best, the champs. If I can hold my own now, what about later?'"

Holmes first gained credibility as a contender when he upset the hard-punching Earnie Shavers in March 1978. Holmes won by a lopsided twelve-round unanimous decision, winning every round on two scorecards and all but one on the third. Holmes's victory over Shavers set up a title shot between Holmes and WBC Heavyweight Champion Ken Norton in Las Vegas, Nevada on June 9, 1978.

2.37.4 WBC Heavyweight Champion - Holmes v Norton

The fight between Holmes and Norton was a tough, competitive fight. After fourteen rounds, all three judges had the fight scored dead even at seven rounds each. Holmes rallied late in the fifteenth to win the round on two scorecards and take the title by a split decision.^[6]

In his first two title defenses, Holmes easily knocked out Alfredo Evangelista and Ossie Ocasio. His third title defense was a tough one. On June 22, 1979, Holmes faced future WBA Heavyweight Champion Mike Weaver, who was lightly regarded going into the fight sporting an uninspiring 19–8 record. After ten tough rounds, Holmes

dropped Weaver with a right uppercut late in round eleven. In the twelfth, Holmes immediately went on the attack, backing Weaver into the ropes and pounding him with powerful rights until the referee stepped in and stopped it. “This man knocked the devil out of me,” Holmes said. “This man might not have had credit before tonight, but you'll give it to him now.”^[8]

Three months later, on September 28, 1979, Holmes had a rematch with Shavers, who got a title shot by knocking out Ken Norton in one round. Holmes dominated the first six rounds, but in the seventh, Shavers sent Holmes down with a devastating overhand right. Holmes got up, survived the round, and went on to stop Shavers in the eleventh.^[9]

His next three defenses were knockouts of Lorenzo Zanon, Leroy Jones, and Scott LeDoux.

On October 2, 1980, at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Holmes defended his title against Ali, who was coming out of retirement in an attempt to become the first four-time World Heavyweight Champion. Holmes dominated Ali from start to finish, winning every round on every scorecard. At the end of the tenth round, Ali's trainer, Angelo Dundee, stopped the fight. It would be Ali's only loss without “going the distance” for a judges' decision.^[10] After the win, Holmes received recognition as World Heavyweight Champion by *The Ring* magazine.

Ali blamed his poor performance on thyroid medication that he had been taking, claiming that it helped him lose weight (he weighed 217½, his lowest weight since he fought George Foreman in 1974), but it also left him drained for the fight.^[11]

Holmes seemed to show signs of regret, or at least sadness, in punishing Ali so much during the fight. He appeared in a post fight interview with tears in his eyes as he was asked why he was crying, replying that he respected Ali “a whole lot” and “he fought one of the baddest heavyweights in the world today, and you cannot take credit from him.”^[12]

After eight consecutive knockouts, Holmes was forced to go the distance when he successfully defended his title against future WBC Heavyweight Champion Trevor Berbick on April 11, 1981. In his next fight, two months later, Holmes knocked out former Undisputed World Heavyweight Champion Leon Spinks in three rounds. On November 6, 1981, Holmes rose from a seventh-round knockdown (during which he staggered into the turnbuckle) to stop Renaldo Snipes in the eleventh.

Holmes vs. Cooney

Main article: [Larry Holmes vs. Gerry Cooney](#)

On June 11, 1982, Holmes defended his title against Gerry Cooney, the undefeated #1 contender and an Irish-American. The lead up to the fight had many racial

overtones. Holmes said that if Cooney wasn't white, he wouldn't be getting the same purse as the champion (Both boxers received \$10 million for the bout).^[13] Although Cooney tried to deflect questions about race, members of his camp wore shirts that said “Not the White Man, but the Right Man.”^[13] In their fight previews, *Sports Illustrated* and *Time* put Cooney on the cover, not Holmes. President Ronald Reagan had a phone installed in Cooney's dressing room so he could call him if he won the fight. Holmes had no such arrangement. Lastly, boxing tradition dictates that the champion is introduced last, but the challenger, Cooney, was introduced last.^[13]

The bout was held in a 32,000 seat stadium erected in a Caesar's Palace Parking lot, with millions more watching around the world. After an uneventful first round, Holmes dropped Cooney with a right in the second. Cooney came back well in the next two rounds, jarring Holmes with his powerful left hook. Holmes later said that Cooney “hit me so damned hard, I felt it—boom—in my bones.”^[14] Cooney was tiring by the ninth, a round in which he had two points deducted for low blows. In the tenth, they traded punches relentlessly. At the end of the round, the two nodded to each other in respect.^[14] Cooney lost another point because of low blows in the eleventh. By then, Holmes was landing with ease. In the thirteenth, a barrage of punches sent Cooney down. He got up, but his trainer, Victor Valle, stepped into the ring and stopped the fight.^[14]

After the fight, Holmes and Cooney became close friends.^{[14][15]}

Trouble with the WBC

Holmes' next two fights were one-sided decision wins over Randall “Tex” Cobb and ex-European champion Lucien Rodriguez. On May 23, 1983, Holmes defended his title against Tim Witherspoon, the future WBC and WBA Heavyweight Champion. Witherspoon, a six to one underdog and with only 15 professional bouts to his name, surprised many by giving Holmes a difficult fight. After twelve rounds, Holmes retained the title by a disputed split decision.^[16] *Boxing Monthly* named it one of the ten most controversial decisions of all time.

On September 10, 1983, Holmes successfully defended the WBC title for the sixteenth time, knocking out Scott Frank in five rounds. Holmes then signed to fight Marvis Frazier, son of Joe Frazier, on November 25, 1983. The WBC refused to sanction the fight against the unranked Frazier. They ordered Holmes to fight Greg Page, the #1 contender, or be stripped of the title. Promoter Don King offered Holmes \$2.55 million to fight Page, but the champion didn't think that was enough. He was making \$3.1 million to fight Frazier and felt he should get as much as \$5 million to fight Page.^[17]

Holmes had an easy time with Frazier, knocking him out in the first round.^[18] The following month, Holmes re-

linquished the WBC championship and accepted recognition as World Heavyweight Champion by the newly formed International Boxing Federation.^[19]

2.37.5 IBF Heavyweight Champion

Holmes signed to fight **Gerrie Coetzee**, the WBA Champion, on June 15, 1984 at Caesar's Palace. The fight was being promoted by JPD Inc., but it was canceled when Caesar's Palace said the promoters failed to meet the financial conditions of the contract. Holmes was promised \$13 million and Coetzee was promised \$8 million. Even after cutting the purses dramatically, they still couldn't come up with enough financial backing to stage the fight.^[20] Don King then planned to promote the fight, but Holmes lost a lawsuit filed by Virginia attorney Richard Hirschfeld, who said he had a contract with Holmes that gave him right of first refusal on a Holmes-Coetzee bout. Holmes then decided to move on and fight someone else.^[21]

On November 9, 1984, after a year out of the ring, Holmes made his first defense of the IBF title, stopping James "Boncrusher" Smith on a cut in the twelfth round. In the first half of 1985, Holmes stopped **David Bey** in ten rounds for his 19th title defense. His next against **Carl "The Truth" Williams** was unexpectedly tough. The younger, quicker Williams was able to out-jab the aging champion, who was left with a badly swollen eye by the end of the bout. Holmes emerged with a close, and disputed, fifteen-round unanimous decision.

On September 21, 1985, Holmes stepped in the ring looking to equal **Rocky Marciano's** 49-0 career record and to make his twentieth successful title defense. His opponent was looking to make history as well. After winning the undisputed championship at light heavyweight, **Michael Spinks** decided to move up in weight and try to become the second fighter after **Bob Fitzsimmons** to win titles at both light heavyweight and heavyweight. It would be Spinks whose historical destiny would be fulfilled, albeit controversially, as he defeated Holmes via unanimous decision to become the first reigning light heavyweight champion to win the heavyweight title.^[22] After the fight, a bitter Holmes said, "Rocky Marciano couldn't carry my jockstrap."

Holmes had a rematch with Spinks on April 19, 1986. Spinks retained the title with a disputed fifteen-round split decision. The judges scored the fight: Judge Joe Cortez 144–141 (Holmes), Judge Frank Brunette 141–144 (Spinks) and Judge Jerry Roth 142–144 (Spinks).^[23] In a post-fight interview with HBO, Holmes said, "the judges, the referees and promoters can kiss me where the sun don't shine—and because we're on HBO, that's my big black behind."^[24]

On November 6, 1986, three days after his 37th birthday, Holmes announced his retirement.^[25]

2.37.6 Comebacks

Main articles: **Mike Tyson vs. Larry Holmes**, **Ray Mercer vs. Larry Holmes and Evander Holyfield vs. Larry Holmes**

On January 22, 1988, Holmes was lured out of retirement by a \$2.8 million purse to challenge reigning Undisputed World Heavyweight Champion **Mike Tyson**. Tyson dropped Holmes in the fourth round with an overhand right. Holmes got up, but Tyson put him down two more times in the round, and the fight was stopped. It was the only time Holmes would be knocked out in his lengthy career. After the fight, Holmes once again retired.^[26]

Holmes returned to the ring in 1991 and became a much more active fighter, usually fighting on *USA Tuesday Night Fights* cards every few weeks against up and comers and journeymen. After five straight wins, he fought **Ray Mercer**, the undefeated 1988 Olympic Gold Medalist, on February 7, 1992. Holmes pulled off the upset and won by a twelve-round unanimous decision.^[27] The win got Holmes a shot at **Evander Holyfield** for the Undisputed World Heavyweight Championship. On June 19, 1992, Holyfield defeated Holmes by a twelve-round unanimous decision.^[28]

On April 8, 1995, he fought **Oliver McCall** for the WBC title. Holmes lost by a close twelve-round unanimous decision. Two of the judges had him losing by only one point, while the other judge had him losing by three points.^[29]

Holmes was back in the ring five months later, resuming the pace he had set since his comeback. However, an aging former champion was growing tired of the sport and, after he fought and knocked out **Anthony Willis** in June 1996 on another USA boxing event, Holmes announced that unless he received a shot at the title, the fight against Willis was likely to be his last.

On January 24, 1997, Holmes got one last opportunity to fight for a heavyweight championship when he traveled to **Copenhagen** to fight undefeated **International Boxing Organization** champion **Brian Nielsen**. Nielsen won by a twelve-round split decision to retain the **International Boxing Organization** title.^[30]

Holmes and **George Foreman** signed to fight on January 23, 1999 at the **Houston Astrodome**. Foreman called off the fight several weeks before it was to take place because the promoter failed to meet the deadline for paying him the remaining \$9 million of his \$10 million purse. Foreman received a nonrefundable \$1 million deposit, and Holmes got to keep a \$400,000 down payment of his \$4 million purse.^[31]

Holmes' next two fights were rematches with old foes. On June 18, 1999, he stopped "Boncrusher" Smith in eight rounds,^[32] and on November 17, 2000, he stopped **Mike Weaver** in six.^[33]



Holmes in Beaufort, South Carolina in 2010.

Holmes' final fight was on July 27, 2002 in Norfolk, Virginia. He defeated Eric "Butterbean" Esch by a ten-round unanimous decision.^[34]

2.37.7 Honors

Holmes was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2008.^[35]

2.37.8 Life after boxing

Holmes invested the money he earned from boxing and settled in his hometown of Easton. When he retired from boxing, Holmes employed more than 200 people through his various business holdings. In 2008, he owned two restaurants and a nightclub, a training facility, an office complex, a snack food bar and slot machines.^[36] Holmes currently co-hosts a talk show *What The Heck Were They Thinking?*^[37]

In 2014, Holmes sold his business complex in Easton to business entrepreneur Gerald Gorman.^[38]

In 2016 Larry Holmes guest starred as himself in an episode of the Mike Tyson Mysteries titled "Unsolved Situations".

2.37.9 Personal life

Larry Holmes married his wife, Diane, in 1979. Together they have had two children, Kandy Holmes and Larry Holmes Jr.^[39] He has two brothers, Robert Holmes and Mark Holmes.

2.37.10 Professional boxing record

2.37.11 See also

- List of heavyweight boxing champions
- List of WBC world champions

2.37.12 References

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2.37.13 External links

- Larry Holmes Official Web Site
- Larry Holmes fight-by-fight career record at About.com
- Professional boxing record for Larry Holmes from BoxRec
- Bio – file profile QA with Larry Holmes at Boxingsider.com

2.38 Trevor Berbick

Trevor Berbick (August 1, 1954 – October 28, 2006) was a boxer who was the WBC heavyweight champion of the world in 1986. He won the title from Pinklon Thomas via a 12-round unanimous decision, and lost it in his first defence to a 20-year-old Mike Tyson, via a 2nd-round TKO. He was the last man to fight Muhammad Ali, winning a 10-round unanimous decision in Nassau, Bahamas on December 11, 1981.

2.38.1 Biography

Early life

He was born on August 1, 1954 in Norwich, Port Antonio, Jamaica.

Amateur career

At 21, Berbick represented his native Jamaica in the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal, Quebec, Canada as a heavyweight boxer, despite having had only 11 prior amateur bouts. His lack of experience was plainly evident as he lost to the eventual silver medalist, Mircea Şimon of Romania. However, he still displayed a lot of promise as a young heavyweight boxer. He lost a decision to future heavyweight champion Michael Dokes in the Pan-Am semifinals.

Professional career

Berbick left Jamaica after the Olympics. He opted to stay in Canada and fight professionally out of Montreal and Halifax. He won his first 11 fights (10 by knockout)

before suffering his first pro loss to another rising contender, **Bernardo Mercado**, on April 3, 1979. As an amateur, Berbick had soundly beaten Mercado. However, with 10 seconds remaining in the first round of their only professional meeting, Berbick walked into a punch and was knocked out cold. Nevertheless, he remained in contention for the heavyweight title.

A 1980 upset of ex-champ **John Tate** (9th round KO) secured a title shot against **Larry Holmes** on April 11, 1981, but Berbick lost a 15-round unanimous decision. In his second fight after the loss, he beat 39-year-old **Muhammad Ali** in the final fight of Ali's career.

In 1982 he beat undefeated prospect **Greg Page**, and in 1984 he moved to **Miramar, Florida** and signed with promoter **Don King**. Wins over undefeated **Mitch "Blood" Green** and **David Bey** scored him another title fight, and he won the WBC world heavyweight title by upsetting **Pinklon Thomas** with an easy unanimous decision on March 22, 1986. However, his reign as champion would be brief.

On November 22, in his first defense of the title, Berbick took on **Mike Tyson**, who was looking to break **Floyd Patterson's** record and become, at the age of twenty, the youngest ever heavyweight champion. In the second round, Tyson dropped Berbick with a quick knockdown. Berbick was quickly overwhelmed by his opponent and late in the round, he went down again. The champion rose to his feet, but immediately stumbled backward and fell back to the canvas. Berbick tried twice more to make it to his feet but fell both times, and referee **Mills Lane** stopped counting and waved the fight off to end Berbick's reign as champion.

Along with **Larry Holmes**, Berbick is one of only two men in professional boxing history to have fought both **Muhammad Ali** and **Mike Tyson**.

In 1991, he went to the UWFI in **Japan** to fight **Nobuhiko Takada** in a "boxer vs. wrestler" bout. Berbick claimed that he had been double-crossed and that he had expected the fight to be like **American kickboxing**, but it turned out that the rules allowed Takada to kick Berbick below the belt. Berbick refused to mount any offense, instead repeatedly complaining to the referee as Takada kicked him repeatedly in the legs. Takada claimed victory by default when Berbick exited the ring.^[1]

Afterwards, his career deteriorated further. He eventually fought his last bout in 2000 against Canadian journeyman **Shane Sutcliffe**, winning a 12-round unanimous decision. Afterwards, a **CAT scan** revealed a blood clot in his brain and his boxing license was revoked. His final professional record was 49 wins (33 by knockout), 11 losses, and 1 draw.

2.38.2 Outside the ring

Berbick was a preacher at the Moments of Miracles Pentecostal church in Las Vegas.

Troubles with the law

Berbick was arrested on a number of occasions throughout his life and was sentenced in Florida to 5 years in prison for sexually assaulting his children's babysitter in 1992. He served 15 months. In 1997, he violated his parole and was deported from the **United States**.

Feud with Larry Holmes

Berbick had a well-publicized feud with **Larry Holmes**, whom he fought in the ring in 1981. Their feud culminated in a public confrontation and brawl in 1991, which was caught on tape. After a verbal altercation indoors, Berbick was outside complaining about being kicked and punched by **Larry Holmes** when Holmes climbed atop a parked car and launched himself at Berbick. The footage ends as the two are separated by police and others.^[2]

Retirement

He retired in **Florida** to be with his wife and four children (he had three children with his first wife in **Montreal**) and started to train boxers at **Kenny Barrett's Gym** in **Tamarac, Florida**. Berbick's problems escalated. He was again deported from the U.S. on December 2, 2002.

Murder

On October 28, 2006, Berbick was murdered at a church in **Norwich, Jamaica** by an assailant wielding a 2-inch-thick (51 mm) steel pipe. He suffered multiple blows to the head and died at the scene.^[3]

Police arrested two men, one of whom was Berbick's 20-year-old nephew **Harold Berbick**,^[4] in connection with the murder. They were interrogated at the **Port Antonio** police station in **Portland** as of early in the morning of October 29.^[5] Local residents indicated that the suspect was involved in a land dispute with Berbick.^[6] On November 3 it was reported that Berbick's nephew, 20-year-old **Harold Berbick**, and an unidentified 18-year-old man had been charged with his murder by **Jamaican police**.^[7] On December 20, 2007, **Harold Berbick** was found guilty of the murder of his uncle. His alleged accomplice, **Kenton Gordon**, was found guilty of manslaughter. Both were sentenced on January 11, 2008.^[8] **Harold Berbick** was sentenced to life in prison; **Kenton Gordon** was sentenced to fourteen years in prison.^[9] He was buried at the **Berbick Family Plot Norwich Portland, Jamaica**

2.38.3 In popular culture

Berbick is briefly portrayed as the ghost of Trevor Berbick in the “Ultimate Judgment Day” episode of *Mike Tyson Mysteries*.

2.38.4 Professional boxing record

2.38.5 References

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2.38.6 External links

- Professional boxing record for Trevor Berbick from *BoxRec*
- Sports Illustrated Obituary
- American Heritage on Trevor Berbick vs. Muhammad Ali

Chapter 3

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- **Bob Foster (boxer)** *Source:* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Foster_\(boxer\)?oldid=711782703](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bob_Foster_(boxer)?oldid=711782703) *Contributors:* AntonioMartin, Topbanana, Naddy, David Gerard, MusiCitizen, Stevietheman, D6, Bender235, Srbauer, Wadems, Pcpccp, Ibeb1, Woohookitty, Lincher, Kbdank71, Koavf, Rogerd, FlaBot, RobyWayne, Jfiling, RussBot, ArcTheLad, Jaxl, Wknight94, Nikkimaria, PRehse, SmackBot, CRK-ington, Colonel Tom, Evanreyes, Betacommand, SteveO, Darius Dhlomo, Colonies Chris, Rcbutcher, GoodDay, Seattlenow, Wizardman, Ultraexactzz, Pilotguy, Ser Amantio di Nicolao, ClarkFreifeld, Cydebot, GARYOCONNELL, Phoe, Tombarrister, Connormah, JNW, Vintagekits, Jackboogie, Waacstats, Fabrictramp, Pixie2000, Brain Rodeo, Trusilver, Standingfish, RoboMaxCyberSem, DH85868993, Thismightbezach, TXiKiBoT, Pessottino, Yankees10, Oxymoron83, FoxLad, Cgibson27, Tmh2040, ClueBot, RonSigPi, Niceguyedc, 718 Bot, DragonBot, Alexbot, Fep70, Hideki1976, Addbot, OttRider, Mac Dreamstate, LaaknorBot, Lightbot, Luckas-bot, Delayednm, Yobot, Materialschemist, Albatross48, Garkeith, COLONEL77, PM800, Miracle Pen, Flintian, RjwilmsiBot, ZéroBot, H3llBot, Bjermaine, ClueBot NG, BG19bot, MaxPayne888, Lawrenceng18, BoxingGoMan, Pduplessis1, TDKR Chicago 101, 1982vdven, Koti.hung, The Original Filfi, Boxwriter2008, KasparBot, EsQueSan, PTFS2015 and Anonymous: 45
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 - Improved version from xmap flag collection 2.9.

Original artist: Caleb Moore

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