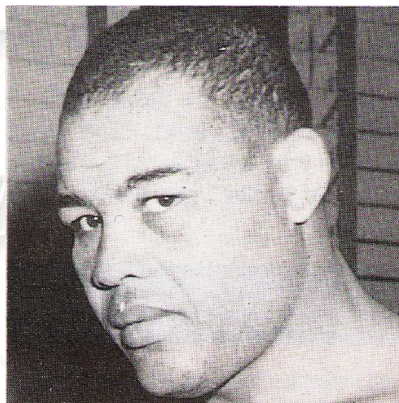


SPORTING LEGENDS: JOE LOUIS

SPORT: BOXING

COMPETITIVE ERA: 1934 - 1951

Joseph Louis Barrow (1914-1981), better known in the boxing world as Joe Louis and nicknamed The Brown Bomber, was a native of Lexington, Alabama who became World Heavyweight Champion.



The son of a cotton picker and a homemaker, Louis became interested in boxing after the Barrows moved to Detroit in 1924. He went on to win Michigan's Golden Gloves title, after which he turned professional in 1934. Louis made his debut on July 4 of that year, knocking out Jack Kracken in the first round at Chicago, Illinois that night. He won 12 fights that year, all in Chicago, 10 by knockout. Among his opponents in 1934 was Art Sykes, a top contender.

In 1935, he boxed 13 more times, and started touring the United States and Canada. He won each of his fights, and he began to face better opposition, beating former world Heavyweight champions Primo Carnera and Max Baer, and former Carnera world title challenger Paolino Uzcudun. His last four bouts that year were exhibitions in Canada, as one fight versus Isodoro Castagana, supposed to take place December 29 at Havana, Cuba, was suspended.

He began 1936 knocking out Charlie Retzlaff in the first round. In his next fight, however, he was matched with former world Heavyweight champion Max Schmeling, who was thought to be fading when he upset Louis by a knockout in 12 at New York. The German had studied Louis and found a gap in his coverage, which enabled him to hit Louis hard in the early rounds, which led to a KO in round 12. Louis and his supporters were devastated.

Schmeling now deserved a fight for the title, but was denied a chance to challenge the world champion.

SPORTING LEGENDS: JOE LOUIS



Louis had it all; speed, agility and power!

That year Louis had four more bouts, winning all of them, and three exhibitions. Among the boxers he defeated were former Heavyweight champ Jack Sharkey and Eddie Simms, who turned and asked the referee to take a walk on the roof with him after a hit from Louis. The referee stopped the fight right away.

1937 came by, and after a ten round decision win over Bob Pastor, Louis was matched with world champion James J. Braddock in Chicago for the World Heavyweight title. Louis was dropped in round one, but he got up and became the world champion by knocking Braddock out in round eight. He said after the fight, however, that he would not feel like a world champion until he beat one man: Schmeling. Louis retained the title three times, outpointing the capable Welshman Tommy Farr and knocking out Nathan Mann in three and Harry Thomas in five.

The rematch with Schmeling finally took place, on June 22, 1938. This time the fight was hyped on both sides of the Atlantic, and many fans around the world saw this fight as a symbol: Louis representing the American interests and Schmeling, who was wrongly seen as a Nazi, fighting for Germany and white supremacy.

The fight itself ended quickly. With his superior speed, Louis retained his title by a knockout in the first round, avenging his only loss up until that time and achieving something not too many African-Americans of the era imagined anyone could do: becoming a national hero both for the white and the black population. Louis was black, so when he won the title, he had become an example to his fellow black Americans. But by beating a German boxer, Louis won over whites too, something very hard to do during the 1930s and 1940s in the United States.

In between serving in the United States Army during the Second World War, Louis kept on defending his title, totalling 25 defenses from '37 to 1949.

SPORTING LEGENDS: JOE LOUIS



Although a great team player, for many fans, Dan Marino WAS the Miami Dolphins.

He was a world champion for 11 years and 10 months, after which he left his crown vacant. He set records for any division in number of defenses and longevity as world champion non stop, and both records still stand.

Louis joined the Army from 1942 to 1945 and spent that whole period travelling around Europe visiting with the fighting troops and boxing in exhibitions. During this time, he became a national spokesman for the Army, inviting young men to join in and help their country in the war.

He even acted in a couple of movies, produced by the Army to entice men to go to the war. After he came back to keep defending his title in 1946, Louis looked somewhat slower in his fights, and his best years seemed to have gone. He still managed to fend off every challenger until he retired for the first time, after the second Walcott bout. On March 1, 1949 Louis announced his retirement from boxing.

In 1950, burdened by I.R.S. debt, he announced a comeback and was promptly given a chance to recover his title, but he lost a 15 round unanimous decision to world champion Ezzard Charles, who had won the title after Louis left it vacant. He kept boxing, and in his next fight he beat fringe contender Cesar Brion by a decision in 10. Seven more wins followed, including a rematch with Brion and a decision over fellow hall of famer Jimmy Bivins.

In 1951, however, he would box what would be his final fight: In front of a national television audience, Louis lost by a knockout in eight rounds to the future world Heavyweight Champion, Rocky Marciano. Louis did not embarrass himself that night, but it was obvious his best years had gone by. He retired with a record of 68 wins and 3 losses, with 54 wins by a knockout.

SPORTING LEGENDS: JOE LOUIS



Scott Burton's Final Thought

It speaks volumes when many critics agree that Joe Louis Should be considered as one of the finest fighters of the 20th Century.

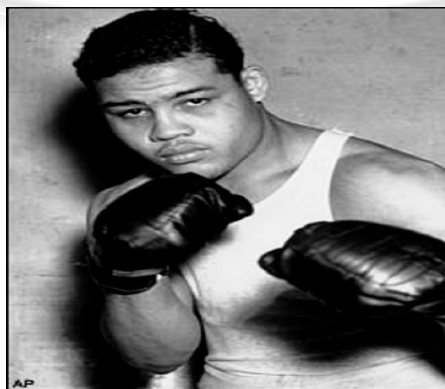
After winning the championship, he held it almost 12 years to set a record, plus set another record with 25 successful title defences. That's impressive.

He retired with a 60-1 record, only to make an unsuccessful and very sad comeback at the age of 37. While champion, Joe Louis volunteered to join the U.S. Army at the height of his career.

He made two title defences in which he donated his entire purses to relief funds to help both the Army and the Navy. He spent almost five years in the service and boxed hundreds of exhibitions. However, after the war, he was hounded by the Internal Revenue Service to pay back taxes on the purses he had donated.

He suffered terribly through this ordeal. and soon found himself broke. He launched a "controversial" pro-wrestling career and was undefeated in some 20 matches before retiring with a heart problem.

He was helped by his good friend Frank Sinatra and acted in a few films, worked as a host in Las Vegas, and made numerous appearances for boxing. He died a few years after suffering a massive stroke. Joe Louis was buried with full-military honours, and it was said that he was "most" proud of his European-African-Middle Eastern Medal and his Victory Medal World War II. In or out of the ring, Joe Louis was a Champion.



Joe Louis had extremely fast hands, a great jab and was a great mover.