



AMERICAN COMMEMORATIVES



JOE LOUIS

Joseph Louis Barrow, World Heavyweight Champion from 1937 to 1949, aka "The Brown Bomber" was born in Lexington, Alabama on May 13, 1914. His father, a sharecropper, died when Louis was only two years old. Louis' mother remarried and moved to Detroit where she raised Joe and his seven brothers and sisters.

Louis began boxing professionally in 1934. By September 1935, after Louis knocked out two former heavyweight champions in four months, the American public started to acknowledge him as the best fighter in the world.



Louis suffered a devastating defeat at the hands of German heavyweight Max Schmeling. Consequently, Louis' most memorable fight occurred when he revenged the loss and knocked out Schmeling in the first round at the same time as Hitler's armies were plunging the world into war. One of the greatest stories of sports, this fight made Louis the first national sports hero among whites as well as blacks. Louis fought his way past racial barriers and earned the respect of the press and public and broke ground for the achievements of blacks in every field.

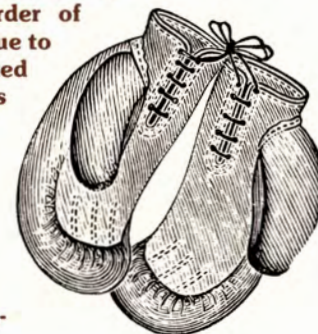
Joe Louis won 68 of 71 bouts, 54 by knockouts. He was known for his quick, killer punches that defeated an opponent in the first few rounds of a bout. He knocked out foe after foe with the most powerful punches ever seen in the ring and held his title longer and defended it more often than any other boxing king ever crowned. Joe enlisted in the US Army in 1942 and gave exhibition bouts for troops around the world. When he donated all his winnings from two title fights to Armed Forces charities during World War II, he was asked why he fought for nothing . . . He replied, "I'm not fighting for nothing, I'm fighting for my country." After retiring in October of 1951, Joe boxed exhibitions in the Far East, mainly with servicemen, during the Korean War.

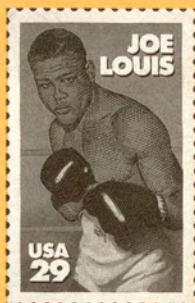


More than 40 years after his finest fights, he continued to be recognized wherever he went and was hailed as a hero. In his declining years in the 1970's, he was given standing ovations wherever he made a public appearance. Louis was elected to *The Ring* magazine Hall of Fame in 1954.

Joe Louis died in Las Vegas on April 12, 1981, and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery by order of President Ronald Reagan. It was once said that due to his boxing prowess and his simple unaffected personality, Joe Louis did more for blacks than any other athlete. A sportswriter added, "He is a credit to his race — the human race."

This commemorative stamp, designed by Thomas Blackshear of Novato, California, was issued on June 22, 1993, in Detroit, Michigan.





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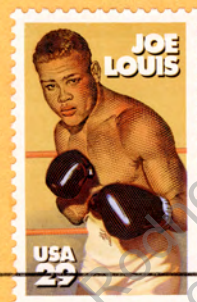
Joe Louis Stamp

As the world heavyweight boxing champion for 12 years, Joe Louis (originally Joseph Louis Barrow) had plenty of major wins to his credit—among them victories over Primo Carnera, Max Baer, and Jersey Joe Walcott. Beginning his professional career in 1934, he won 63 of 66 contests, and 49 of his victories were by knockout. A 1937 knockout, defeating James Braddock, gained Louis the heavyweight championship.

But the most dramatic and undoubtedly the most satisfying accomplishment for Louis came on June 22, 1938, in New York's Yankee Stadium. There, Louis (nicknamed the "Brown Bomber") faced the European champion, Max Schmeling, who also represented Adolf Hitler's Germany. The two had unfinished business.

In 1936, shortly before he became world champion, Louis had fought Schmeling and to the surprise of many had been knocked out. "He fought like an amateur," sneered Schmeling. No wonder Louis had been seething in the interim. And as German aggressiveness in Europe became more evident, Americans saw the second Louis-Schmeling match as a symbolic contest between democracy and Nazism.

From the opening bell, Louis was in a controlled fury. After a storm of punches lasting only two minutes, Schmeling was down for the count. Joe Louis had sweet vengeance, and America had a new hero.



FIRST DAY OF ISSUE