



Knockout Kings

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures of the boxers and important people in their lives.

*Includes the boxers' most colorful quotes.

*Discusses the facts, legends, and controversies surrounding their most famous fights.

"A champion is someone who gets up when he can't." – Jack Dempsey

"To prove I am great, he will fall in eight." – Muhammad Ali

"Everybody in boxing probably makes out well except for the fighter." – Mike Tyson

During a time when America's heroes were recognized for toughness and strength, Jack Dempsey was the prototypical "golden boy" of the Roaring Twenties. Just as Babe Ruth, Red Grange, Bill Tilden and Bobby Jones were the signature figures for their respective sports, Dempsey personified the sport of boxing.

Dempsey's aggressive style in the ring and the punch he packed made him the heavyweight champion by 1913, and by the time Dempsey lost the title to U.S. Marine Gene Tunney in 1926 and retired following their controversial 1927 rematch (a fight known as "The Long Count"), he was one of the most popular and richest athletes in history, and he parlayed that into success in everything from owning a restaurant to authoring books.

The sports world has never suffered from a shortage of self-promoters, but none have ever walked the walk and backed up the talk like Muhammad Ali, boxing's greatest icon and possibly history's most famous athlete. Indeed, even referring to Ali just as a boxer does a disservice to the transcendent figure he has become around the world as a living legend.

Of course, the legend of Ali begins in the squared circle, where a young, brash kid named Cassius Clay rose to the top of the boxing world with a style so unorthodox that anyone else attempting it would all but assure he'd get knocked out. But Ali became the heavyweight champ by keeping his hands low, "floating like a butterfly and stinging like a bee", and outboxing heavyweight champions like Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, and Floyd Patterson. Though he was both loved and hated during his career, since his retirement, Ali has remained one of sports' greatest icons across the globe, and he has been honored with too many awards to count. Held in awe just about everywhere, Ali has lit the torch at the Olympics, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and received the Presidential Citizens Medal, among other honors.

Iron Mike Tyson was one of the most feared opponents to ever step into a boxing ring. With unbelievable power that floored or stopped all but two of his first 28 professional opponents, Tyson began an unprecedented ascent to the top of the boxing world, becoming the youngest champion in history with a second round TKO over Trevor Berbick, the last man to box and defeat Muhammad Ali. That victory, in November 1986, prompted one British sports reporter to write, "The noble and manly art of boxing can at least cease worrying about its immediate future, now it has discovered a heavyweight champion fit to stand alongside Dempsey, Tunney, Louis, Marciano and Ali."

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