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Joe Louis

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For other people named Joe Louis, see [Joe Louis \(disambiguation\)](#).

Joseph Louis Barrow (May 13, 1914 – April 12, 1981), better known as **Joe Louis**, was an [American](#) professional [boxer](#) and the [World Heavyweight Champion](#) from 1937 to 1949. He is considered to be one of the greatest heavyweights of all time. Nicknamed the **Brown Bomber**, Louis helped elevate boxing from a [nadir](#) in popularity in the post-[Jack Dempsey](#) era by establishing a reputation as an honest, hardworking fighter at a time when the sport was dominated by gambling interests.^{[1][2]} Louis' championship reign lasted 140 consecutive months, during which he participated in 26 championship fights; a 27th fight, against [Ezzard Charles](#), was a challenge to Charles' heavyweight title and so is not included in Louis' reign. All in all, Joe was victorious in 25 title defenses, a record for the heavyweight division. In 2005, Louis was ranked as the #1 heavyweight of all-time by the International Boxing Research Organization,^[3] and was ranked #1 on *The Ring's* list of the 100 Greatest Punchers of All-Time.^[4]

Louis' cultural impact was felt well outside the ring. He is widely regarded as the first [African American](#) to achieve the status of a nationwide hero within the [United States](#), and was also a focal point of anti-Nazi sentiment leading up to and during [World War II](#).^[5] He was instrumental in integrating the game of golf, breaking the sport's color barrier in America by appearing under a sponsor's exemption in a [PGA](#) event in 1952.^[6]

[Detroit's Joe Louis Arena](#), home of the [Detroit Red Wings](#) of the [National Hockey League](#), and the [Forest Preserve District of Cook County's](#) Joe Louis "The Champ" Golf Course, situated south of [Chicago](#) in [Riverdale, IL](#), are named in his honor.

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Early life [\[edit\]](#)

Louis was born May 13,1914 and his wife was born June 18,and unknown in a ramshackle dwelling on Bell Chapel Road, located about a 1.6 km (1 mile) off Alabama's Route 50 and roughly 10 km (six miles) north of [Lafayette](#) in rural [Chambers County, Alabama](#). Louis was the son of Munroe Barrow and Lillie (Reese) Barrow, the seventh of eight children.^{[7][8]} He weighed 5.5 kg (11 pounds) at birth.^[7] Both Louis's parents were the children of former slaves, alternating between sharecropping and rental farming.^[9] Munroe was predominantly [African American](#) with some white ancestry, while Lillie was half [Cherokee](#).^[9]

Louis spent twelve years growing up in rural Alabama, where little is known of his childhood. He suffered from a

Joe Louis



Statistics

Real name	Joseph Louis Barrow
Nickname(s)	Brown Bomber
Rated at	Heavyweight
Height	6 ft 2 in (1.88 m)
Reach	76 in (190 cm)
Nationality	American
Born	May 13, 1914 <div>Lafayette, Alabama</div>
Died	April 12, 1981 (aged 66) <div>Paradise, Nevada</div>
Stance	Orthodox
Boxing record	
Total fights	70
Wins	66
Wins by KO	52
Losses	3
Draws	0
No contests	1

speech impediment and spoke very little until about the age of six.^[10] Munroe Barrow was committed to a mental institution in 1916 and, as a result, Joe knew very little of his biological father.^[11] Around 1920, Louis's mother married Pat Brooks, a local construction contractor, having received word that Munroe Barrow had died while institutionalized (in reality, Munroe Barrow lived until 1938, unaware of his son's fame).^[12]

In 1926, shaken by a gang of white men in the **Ku Klux Klan**, Louis's family moved to **Detroit, Michigan**, forming part of the post-World War I **Great Migration**.^{[13][14]} Joe's brother worked for **Ford Motor Company** (where Joe would himself work for a time at the **River Rouge Plant**^[15]) and the family settled into a home at 2700 Catherine (now Madison) Street in Detroit's **Black Bottom** neighborhood.^[16]

Louis attended Bronson Vocational School for a time to learn cabinet-making^[15] and his mother attempted to get him interested in playing the violin.^[17]

Amateur career [edit]

The Depression hit the Barrow family hard, but as an alternative to gang activity, Joe began to spend time at a local youth recreation center at 637 Brewster Street in Detroit. Legend has it that he tried to hide his pugilistic ambitions from his mother by carrying his boxing gloves inside his violin case.

Louis made his debut in early 1932 at age 17. Legend has it that before the fight, the barely-literate Louis wrote his name so large that there was no room for his last name, and thus became known as "Joe Louis" for the remainder of his boxing career. More likely, Louis simply omitted his last name to keep his boxing pursuits a secret from his mother. After this debut – a loss to future Olympian Johnny Miller – Louis compiled numerous amateur victories, eventually winning the club championship of his Brewster Street recreation centre, the home of many aspiring Golden Gloves fighters.

In 1933, Louis won the Detroit-area Golden Gloves Novice Division championship against Joe Biskey for the light heavyweight classification. He later lost in the Chicago Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions. The next year, competing in the Golden Gloves' Open Division, he won the light heavyweight classification, this time also winning the Chicago Tournament of Champions. However, a hand injury forced Louis to miss the New York/Chicago Champions' cross-town bout for the ultimate Golden Gloves championship. In April 1934, he followed up his Chicago performance by winning the United States Amateur Champion National AAU tournament in St. Louis, Missouri.

By the end of his amateur career, Louis's record was 50-4, with 43 knockouts.

Professional career [edit]

Joe Louis had 72 professional fights with only three losses. He tallied 57 knock outs, endured only three defeats, and held the championship from 1937 to 1949, the longest span of any heavyweight titleholder. After returning from retirement, Louis failed to regain the championship 1950, and his career ended after he was knocked out by **Rocky Marciano** in 1951. The man who had been called the Brown Bomber was finished.^[18]

Early years [edit]

Louis's amateur performances attracted the interest of professional promoters, and he was soon represented by a black Detroit-area bookmaker named John Roxborough. As Louis explained in his autobiography, Roxborough convinced the young fighter that white managers would have no real interest in seeing a black boxer work his way up to title contention:

[Roxborough] told me about the fate of most black fighters, ones with white managers, who wound up burned-out and broke before they reached their prime. The white managers were not interested in the men they were handling but in the money they could make from them. They didn't take the proper time to see that their fighters had a proper training, that they lived comfortably, or ate well, or had some pocket change. Mr. Roxborough was talking about Black Power before it became popular.

Roxborough knew a Chicago area boxing promoter named Julian Black who already had a stable of mediocre boxers against which Louis could hone his craft, this time in the heavyweight division. After becoming part of the management team, Black hired fellow Chicago native Jack "Chappy" Blackburn as Louis's trainer. Louis' initial professional fights were all located in the Chicago area, his professional debut coming on July 4, 1934 against Jack Kracken in the Bacon Casino on Chicago's south side. Louis earned \$59 for knocking out Kracken in the first round. Louis won all twelve of his professional fights that year, ten by way of knockout.

In September 1934, while promoting a Detroit-area "coming home" bout for Louis against Canadian Alex Borchuk, Roxborough was pressured by members of the Michigan State Boxing Commission to have Louis sign with white management. Roxborough refused and continued advancing Louis's career with bouts against heavyweight contenders Art Sykesand and Stanley Poreda.

When training for a fight against Lee Ramage, Louis noticed a young female secretary for the black newspaper at the gym. After Ramage was defeated, the secretary, Marva Trotter, was invited to the celebration party at Chicago's Grand Hotel. Trotter later become Louis's first wife in 1935.

During this time, Louis also met **Truman Gibson**, the man who would become his personal lawyer. As a young associate at a law firm hired by Julian Black, Gibson was charged with personally entertaining Louis during the pendency of business deals.

Title contention [edit]

Although Louis' management was finding him bouts against legitimate heavyweight contenders, no path to the title

was forthcoming. While professional boxing was not officially segregated, many white Americans had become wary of the prospect of another black champion in the wake of **Jack Johnson's** highly unpopular (among whites) "reign" atop the heavyweight division.^[1] A glass ceiling kept black boxers out of championship bouts, and there were few heavyweight black contenders at the time, though there were African Americans who fought for titles in other weight divisions, and a few notable black champions such as **Tiger Flowers**. During an era of severe anti-black repression, Jack Johnson's unrepentant masculinity and marriage to a white woman engendered an enormous backlash that greatly limited opportunities of black fighters in the heavyweight division; Louis and his handlers would counter the legacy of Johnson by emphasizing the Brown Bomber's modesty and sportsmanship.^{[1][19]} Biographer Gerald Astor stated that "Joe Louis' early boxing career was stalked by the specter of Jack Johnson".^{[1][20]}

If Louis were to rise to national prominence among such cultural attitudes, a change in management would be necessary. In 1935, boxing promoter **Mike Jacobs** sought out Louis' handlers. After Louis' narrow defeat of Natie Brown on March 29, 1935, Jacobs and the Louis team met at the Frog Club, a colored nightclub, and negotiated a three-year exclusive boxing promotion deal.^[21] The contract, however, did not keep Roxborough and Black from attempting to cash in as Louis' managers; when Louis turned 21 on May 13, 1935, Roxborough and Black each signed Louis to an onerous long-term contract that collectively dedicated half of Louis' future income to the pair.^[22]

Black and Roxborough continued to carefully and deliberately shape Louis' media image. Weary of the tremendous public backlash Johnson had suffered for his unapologetic attitude and flamboyant lifestyle, they drafted "Seven Commandments" for Louis' personal conduct. These included:

- Never have his picture taken with a white woman (though he once was photographed with a white teenaged girl for a local paper in Michigan who was doing a story on Louis for her high school newspaper).
- Never gloat over a fallen opponent
- Never engage in fixed fights
- Live and fight clean^{[23][24]}

As a result, Louis was generally portrayed in the white media as a modest, clean-living person, which facilitated his burgeoning celebrity status.^[25]

With the backing of major promotion, Louis fought thirteen times in 1935. The bout that helped put him in the media spotlight occurred on June 25, when Louis knocked out 6'6", 265-pound former World Heavyweight Champion **Primo Carnera** in six rounds. Foreshadowing the Louis-Schmeling rivalry to come, the Carnera bout featured a political dimension. Louis' victory over Carnera, who symbolized **Benito Mussolini's** regime in the popular eye, was seen as a victory for the international community, particularly among African Americans, who were sympathetic to **Ethiopia**, which was attempting to maintain its independence by fending off an invasion by fascist **Italy**.^{[26][27][28]} America's white press began promoting Louis' image in the context of the era's racism; nicknames they created included the "Mahogany Mauler", "Chocolate Chopper", "Coffee-Colored KO King", "Safari Sandman", and one that stuck: "The Brown Bomber".^{[28][29]}

Helping the white press to overcome its reluctance to feature a black contender was the fact that in the mid-1930s boxing desperately needed a marketable hero. Since the retirement of **Jack Dempsey** in 1929, the sport had devolved into a sordid mixture of poor athletes, gambling, fixed fights, thrown matches, and control of the sport by organized crime.^[1] *New York Times* Columnist Edward Van Ness wrote, "Louis...is a boon to boxing. Just as Dempsey led the sport out of the doldrums...so is Louis leading the boxing game out of a slump."^[1] Likewise, biographer Bill Libby asserted that "The sports world was hungry for a great champion when Louis arrived in New York in 1935."^{[1][2]}

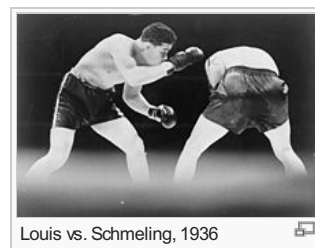
While the mainstream press was beginning to embrace Louis, many still opposed the prospect of another black Heavyweight Champion. In September 1935, on the eve of Louis' fight with the former title holder **Max Baer**, *Washington Post* sportswriter **Shirley Povich** expressed American hopes for the white contender; "They say Baer will surpass himself in the knowledge that he is the lone white hope for the defense of Nordic superiority in the prize ring."^[1] However, the hopes of white supremacists would soon be dashed.

Although Baer had been knocked down only once before in his professional career (by **Frankie Campbell**), Louis dominated the former champion, knocking him out in fourth round. Unknowingly, Baer suffered from a unique disadvantage in the fight; earlier that evening, Louis had married Marva Trotter at a friend's apartment and was eager to end the fight in order to consummate the relationship.^[30] Later that year, Louis also knocked out **Paolino Uzcudun**, who had never been knocked down before.

Louis vs. Schmeling I [edit]

*Main article: **Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling***

By this time, Louis was ranked as the No. 1 contender in the heavyweight division^[31] and had won the *Associated Press* "Athlete of the Year" award for 1935.^[28] What was considered to be a final tune-up bout before an eventual title shot was scheduled for June 1936 against former World Heavyweight Champion **Max Schmeling**. Although a former champion, Schmeling was not considered a threat to Louis, then with an undefeated professional record of 27-0.^[32] Schmeling had won his title on a technicality when **Jack Sharkey** was disqualified after giving Schmeling a low blow in 1930. Schmeling was also 30 years old at the time of the Louis bout and allegedly past his prime.^[32] Louis' training retreat was located at **Lakewood, New Jersey**, where Louis was first able to practice the game of **golf**, which later became a lifelong passion.^[33] Noted entertainer **Ed Sullivan** had initially sparked Louis' interest in the sport by giving an instructional book to Joe's wife, Marva.^[34] Louis spent significant time on the golf course rather than training



Louis vs. Schmeling, 1936

for the Schmeling match.^{[22][35]}

Conversely, Schmeling prepared intently for the bout. Schmeling had thoroughly studied Louis's style and believed he had found a weakness.^[36] By exploiting Louis's habit of dropping his left hand low after a jab, Schmeling handed Louis his first professional loss by knocking him out in Round 12 at [Yankee Stadium](#) on June 19, 1936.^[37]

World Championship [edit]

After defeating Louis, Schmeling expected a title shot against [James J. Braddock](#), who had unexpectedly defeated [Max Baer](#) for the Heavyweight title the previous June. [Madison Square Garden](#) (MSG) had a contract with Braddock for the title defense and also sought a Braddock-Schmeling title bout. But Jacobs and Braddock's manager [Joe Gould](#) had been planning a Braddock-Louis matchup for months.^[38] Schmeling's victory gave Gould tremendous leverage, however; if he were to offer Schmeling the title chance instead of Louis, there was a very real possibility that Nazi authorities would never allow Louis a shot at the title.^[38] Gould's demands were therefore onerous: Jacobs would have to pay 10% of all future boxing promotion profits (including any future profits from Louis's future bouts) for ten years.^[39] Braddock and Gould would eventually receive more than \$150,000 from this arrangement.^[39] Well before the actual fight, Jacobs and Gould publicly announced that their fighters would face for the Heavyweight title on June 22, 1937.^[39] Figuring that the [New York State Athletic Commission](#) would not sanction the fight in deference to MSG and Schmeling, Jacobs scheduled the fight for Chicago.^[39]

Each of the parties involved worked to facilitate the controversial Braddock-Louis matchup. Louis did his part by knocking out former champion [Jack Sharkey](#) on August 18, 1936. Meanwhile, Gould trumped up anti-Nazi sentiment against Schmeling,^[40] and Jacobs defended a lawsuit by MSG to halt the Braddock-Louis fight. A federal court in [Newark, New Jersey](#) eventually ruled that Braddock's contractual obligation to stage his title defense at MSG was unenforceable for lack of mutual consideration.^[40]

The stage was set for Louis's title shot. On the night of the fight, June 22, 1937, Braddock was able to knock Louis down in round one, but afterward could accomplish little. After inflicting constant punishment, Louis defeated the "Cinderella Man" by knockout in Round eight. Louis's ascent to the World Heavyweight Championship was complete.

Louis's victory was a seminal moment in African American history. Thousands of African Americans stayed up all night across the country in celebration.^[5] Noted author and member of the [Harlem Renaissance](#) [Langston Hughes](#) described Louis's effect in these terms:

Each time Joe Louis won a fight in those depression years, even before he became champion, thousands of black Americans on relief or [W.P.A.](#), and poor, would throng out into the streets all across the land to march and cheer and yell and cry because of Joe's one-man triumphs. No one else in the United States has ever had such an effect on Negro emotions—or on mine. I marched and cheered and yelled and cried, too.^[41]

Initial title defenses [edit]

Despite now being Heavyweight Champion, Louis was haunted by the earlier defeat to Schmeling. Shortly after winning the title, he was quoted as saying, "I don't want to be called champ until I whip Max Schmeling."^[32] Louis's manager Mike Jacobs attempted to arrange a rematch with Schmeling in 1937, but negotiations broke down when Schmeling demanded 30% of the gate.^[42] When Schmeling instead attempted to arrange for a fight against British Empire Champion [Tommy Farr](#), known as the "Tonypandy Terror",—ostensibly for a world championship to rival the claims of American boxing authorities—Jacobs outmaneuvered him, offering Farr a guaranteed \$60,000 to fight Louis instead. The offer was too lucrative for Farr to turn down.^[43]

On August 30, 1937, after a postponement of four days due to rain, Louis and Farr finally touched gloves at New York's [Yankee Stadium](#) before a crowd of approximately 32,000.^[44] Louis fought one of the hardest battles of his life. The bout was closely contested and went the entire 15 rounds, with Louis being unable to knock Farr down. Referee Arthur Donovan was even seen shaking Farr's hand after the bout, in apparent congratulation.^[45]

Nevertheless, after the score was announced, Louis had won a controversial unanimous decision.^{[45][46]} *Time* described the scene thus: "After collecting the judges' votes, referee Arthur Donovan announced that Louis had won the fight on points. The crowd of 50,000...amazed that Farr had not been knocked out or even knocked down, booed the decision. It seems the crowd believed that referee Arthur Donovan, Sr. had raised Farr's glove in victory. Seven years later, in his published account of the fight, Donovan spoke of the "mistake" that may have led to this confusion. He wrote:

As Tommy walked back to his corner after shaking Louis' hand, I followed him and seized his glove. "Tommy, a wonderful perform—" I began... Then I dropped his hand like a red-hot coal! He had started to raise his arm. He thought I had given him the fight and the world championship! I literally ran away, shaking my head and shouting. "No! No! No!" realising how I had raised his hopes for a few seconds only to dash them to the ground... That's the last time my emotions will get the better of me in a prize fight! There was much booing at the announced result, but, as I say it, it was all emotional. I gave Tommy two rounds and one even—and both his winning rounds were close.^[47]

Speaking over the radio after the fight, Louis admitted that he had been hurt twice.^[48]

In preparation for the inevitable rematch with Schmeling, Louis tuned up with bouts against Nathan Mann and [Harry Thomas](#).

Louis vs. Schmeling II [edit]

The rematch between Louis and Schmeling would become one of the most famous boxing matches of all time and is remembered as one of the major sports events of the 20th century.^[32] Following his defeat of Louis in 1936, Schmeling became a national hero in [Germany](#). Schmeling's victory over an African American was touted by Nazi officials as proof of their doctrine of [Aryan superiority](#). When the rematch was scheduled, Louis retreated to his boxing camp in New Jersey and trained incessantly for the fight. A few weeks before the bout, Louis visited the White House, where President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) told him, "Joe, we need muscles like yours to beat Germany."^[32] Louis later admitted: "I knew I had to get Schmeling good. I had my own personal reasons and the whole damned country was depending on me."^[49]

When Schmeling arrived in [New York](#) in June 1938 for the rematch, he was accompanied by a Nazi party publicist who issued statements that a black man could not defeat Schmeling and that when Schmeling won, his prize money would be used to build tanks in Germany. Schmeling's hotel was picketed by anti-Nazi protesters in the days before the fight.^[32]

On the night of June 22, 1938, Louis and Schmeling met for the second time in the boxing ring. The fight was held in Yankee Stadium before a crowd of 70,043. It was broadcast by radio to millions of listeners throughout the world, with radio announcers reporting on the fight in English, German, Spanish, and Portuguese. Before the bout, Schmeling weighed in at 193 pounds; Louis weighed in at 198¾ pounds.^[32]

The fight lasted two minutes and four seconds.^[50] Louis battered Schmeling with a series of swift attacks, forcing Schmeling against the ropes and giving him a paralyzing body blow (Schmeling later claimed it was an illegal kidney punch). Schmeling was knocked down three times and only managed to throw two punches in the entire bout. On the third knockdown, Schmeling's trainer threw in the towel and referee Arthur Donovan stopped the fight.^[32]

"Bum of the Month Club" [edit]

In the 29 months from January 1939 through May 1941, Louis defended his title thirteen times, a frequency unmatched by any Heavyweight Champion since the end of the bare-knuckle era. The pace of his title defenses, combined with his convincing wins, earned Louis' opponents from this era the collective nickname "Bum of the Month Club".^[23] Notables of this lambasted pantheon include:

- World Light Heavyweight Champion [John Henry Lewis](#) who, attempting to move up a weight class, was knocked out in the first round by Louis on January 25, 1939.^[51]
- "Two Ton" [Tony Galento](#), who was able to push Louis to the canvas in the third round of their bout on June 28, 1939, before letting his guard down and being knocked out in the fourth.^[51]
- Chilean [Arturo Godoy](#), whom Louis fought twice in 1940, on February 9 and June 20. Louis won the first bout by a decision, and the rematch by a knockout in the eighth round.^[51]
- [Al McCoy](#), putative [New England](#) Heavyweight Champion, whose fight against Louis is probably best known for being the first Heavyweight title bout held in [Boston](#), Massachusetts (at the [Boston Garden](#) on December 16, 1940). The popular local challenger dodged his way around Louis before being unable to respond to the sixth-round bell.^[51]
- [Clarence "Red" Burman](#), who pressed Louis for nearly five rounds at Madison Square Garden on January 31, 1941 before succumbing to a series of body blows.^[51]
- Gus Dorazio, of whom Louis remarked, "At least he tried", after being leveled by a short right hand in the second round at [Philadelphia's](#) Convention Hall on February 17.^[51]
- [Abe Simon](#), who endured thirteen rounds of punishment before 18,908 at [Olympia Stadium](#) in Detroit on March 21 before referee Sam Hennessy declared a TKO.
- Tony Musto, who, at 5'7½" and 198 pounds, was known as the "baby tank." Despite a unique crouching style, Musto was slowly worn down over eight and a half rounds in St. Louis on April 8.^[51]
- [Buddy Baer](#) (brother of former champion Max), who was leading the May 23, 1941, bout in [Washington, D.C.](#), until an eventual barrage by Louis, capped by a hit at the sixth round bell. Referee Arthur Donovan disqualified Baer before the beginning of the seventh round as a result of stalling by Baer's manager.^[51]

Despite its derogatory nickname, most of the group were top-ten heavyweights. Of the twelve fighters Louis faced during this period, five were rated by *The Ring* as top-ten heavyweights in the year they fought Louis: Galento (overall #2 heavyweight in 1939), Bob Pastor (#3, 1939), Godoy (#3, 1940), Simon (#6, 1941) and Baer (#8, 1941); four others (Musto, Dorazio, Burman and Johnny Paycheck) were ranked in the top ten in a different year.^[52]

Billy Conn fight [edit]

Louis' string of lightly regarded competition ended with his bout against [Billy Conn](#), the Light Heavyweight Champion and a highly regarded contender. The fighters met on June 18, 1941, in front of a crowd of 54,487 fans at the [Polo Grounds](#) in [New York City](#).^[53] The fight turned out to be one of the greatest heavyweight boxing fights of all time.

Conn would not gain weight for the challenge against Louis, saying instead that he would rely on a "hit and run" strategy. Louis' famous response: "He can run, but he can't hide."^{[15][54]}

However, Louis had clearly underestimated Conn's threat. In his autobiography, Joe Louis said, "I made a mistake going into that fight. I knew Conn was kinda small and I didn't want them to say in the papers that I beat up on some little guy so the day before the fight I did a little roadwork to break a sweat and drank as little water as possible so I could weigh in under 200 pounds. Chappie was as mad as hell. But Conn was a clever fighter, he was like a mosquito, he'd sting and move."^[53]

Conn had the better of the fight through twelve rounds, although Louis was able to stun Conn with a left hook in the fifth, cutting his eye and nose. By the eighth round, Louis began suffering from dehydration. By the twelfth round, Louis was exhausted, with Conn ahead on two of three boxing scorecards. But against the advice of his corner, Conn continued to closely engage Louis in the later stages of the fight. Louis made the most of the opportunity, knocking

Conn out with two seconds left in the thirteenth round.^[53]

The contest created an instant rivalry that Louis's career had lacked since the Schmeling era and a rematch with Conn was planned for late 1942. The rematch had to be abruptly canceled, however, after Conn broke his hand in a much-publicized fight with his father-in-law, major league ballplayer "Greenfield" Jimmy Smith.^[55] By the time Conn was ready for the rematch, the [Japanese](#) attack on [Pearl Harbor](#) had taken place, detouring Louis's heavyweight career.

World War II [edit]



World War II recruiting poster featuring Louis

Louis fought a charity bout for the Navy Relief Society against his former opponent Buddy Baer on January 9, 1942, which generated \$47,000 for the fund.^[15] The next day, he volunteered to enlist as a private in the [United States Army](#) at [Camp Upton, Long Island](#).^{[56][57]} Newsreel cameras recorded his induction, including a staged scene in which a soldier-clerk asked, "What's your occupation?" and Louis replied in a nervous rush, "Fighting and let us at them Japs."^[58]

Another military charity bout on March 27, 1942, (against another former opponent, Abe Simon) netted \$36,146.^[15] Before the fight, Louis had spoken at a Relief Fund dinner, saying of the war effort: "We'll win, 'cause we're on God's side."^[1] The media widely reported the comment, instigating a surge of popularity for Louis. Slowly, the press would begin to eliminate its stereotypical racial references when covering Louis and instead treat him as an unqualified sports hero.^[1] Despite the public relations boon, Louis's charitable fights would prove financially costly. Although Louis saw none of the roughly \$90,000 raised by these and other charitable fights, the [IRS](#) would later credit these amounts as taxable income paid to Louis.^[59] After the war, the IRS would pursue the issue.

For basic training, Louis was assigned to a segregated cavalry unit based in [Fort Riley, Kansas](#). The assignment was at the suggestion of his friend and lawyer [Truman Gibson](#), who knew of Louis's love for horsemanship.^[56] Gibson had previously become a civilian advisor to the War Department, in charge of investigating claims of harassment against black soldiers. Accordingly, Louis used this personal connection to help the cause of various black soldiers with whom he came into contact. In one noted episode, Louis contacted Gibson in order to facilitate the [Officer Candidate School](#) (OCS) applications of a group of African Americans at Fort Riley, which had been inexplicably delayed for several months.^{[60][61]} Among the OCS applications Louis facilitated was that of a young [Jackie Robinson](#), later to break the [baseball color barrier](#).^{[60][62]} The episode would spawn a personal friendship between the two men.^[63]

Realizing Louis's potential for elevating *esprit de corps* among the troops, the Army placed him in its Special Services Division rather than deploying him into combat.^[57] Louis would go on a celebrity tour with other notables including fellow boxer [Sugar Ray Robinson](#).^[58] Louis traveled more than 35,000 km (21,000 miles) and staged 96 boxing exhibitions before two million soldiers.^[15] In [England](#) during 1944, he was reported to have enlisted as a player for [Liverpool Football Club](#) as a publicity stunt.^[64]

In addition to his travels, Louis was the focus of a media recruitment campaign encouraging African-American men to enlist in the Armed Services, despite the military's racial segregation. When asked about his decision to enter the racially segregated U.S. Army, Louis' explanation was simple: "Lots of things wrong with America, but Hitler ain't going to fix them." In 1943, Louis made an appearance in the wartime Hollywood musical *This Is the Army*, directed by [Michael Curtiz](#). Louis appears as himself in a musical number, "The Well-Dressed Man in Harlem", which emphasizes the importance of African-American soldiers and promotes their enlistment.

Louis's celebrity power was not, however, merely directed toward African Americans. In a famous wartime recruitment slogan, Louis echoed his prior comments of 1942: "We'll win, because we're on God's side." The publicity of the campaign made Louis widely popular stateside, even outside the world of sports.^[5] Never before had white Americans embraced a black man as their representative to the world.^[5]



Louis in the army

Although Louis never saw combat, his military service would see challenges of its own. During his travels he would often experience blatant racism. On one occasion, a military policeman (MP) ordered Louis and Ray Robinson to move their seats to a bench in the rear of an Alabama Army camp bus depot. "We ain't moving," said Louis. The MP tried to arrest them, but Louis forcefully argued the pair out of the situation.^[65] In another incident, Louis allegedly had to resort to bribery to persuade a commanding officer to drop charges against [Jackie Robinson](#) for punching a captain who had called Robinson a "nigger."^[61]

Louis was eventually promoted to the rank of [technical sergeant](#) on April 9, 1945. On September 23 of the same year, Louis was awarded the [Legion of Merit](#) (a military decoration rarely awarded to enlisted soldiers) for "incalculable contribution to the general morale."^{[57][66]} Receipt of the honor qualified Louis for immediate release from military service on October 1, 1945.^{[15][67]}

Later career and retirement [edit]

Louis emerged from his wartime service significantly in debt. In addition to his looming tax bill—which had not been finally determined at the time, but was estimated at greater than \$100,000^[58]—Jacobs claimed that Louis owed him \$250,000.^[68]

Despite the financial pressure on Louis to resume boxing, his long-awaited rematch against Billy Conn had to be postponed to the summer of 1946, when weather conditions could accommodate a large outdoor audience. On June

19, a disappointing 40,000 saw the rematch at Yankee Stadium,^[58] in which Louis was not seriously tested. Conn, whose skills had deteriorated during the long layoff, largely avoided contact until being dispatched by knockout in the eighth round. Although the attendance did not meet expectations, the fight was still the most profitable of Louis's career to date. His share of the purse was \$600,000, of which Louis' managers got \$140,000, his ex-wife \$66,000 and the state of New York \$30,000.^[58]

After trouble finding another suitable opponent, on December 5, 1947, Louis met **Jersey Joe Walcott**, a 33-year-old veteran with a 44–11–2 record. Walcott entered the fight as a 10-to-1 underdog. Nevertheless, Walcott knocked down Louis twice in the first four rounds. Most observers in Madison Square Garden felt Walcott dominated the 15-round fight. When Louis was declared the winner in a split decision, the crowd booed.^[58]

Louis was under no delusion about the state of his boxing skills, yet he was too embarrassed to quit after the Walcott fight. Determined to win and retire with his title intact, Louis signed on for a rematch. On June 25, 1948, about 42,000 people came to Yankee Stadium to see the aging champion, who weighed 213½, the heaviest of his career to date. Walcott knocked Louis down in the third round, but Louis survived to knock out Walcott in the eleventh.^[58]

Louis would not defend his title again before announcing his retirement from boxing on March 1, 1949.^[69] In his bouts with Conn and Walcott, it had become apparent that Louis was no longer the fighter he once had been. As he had done earlier in his career, however, Louis would continue to appear in numerous exhibition matches worldwide.^{[15][69]}

Post-retirement comeback [edit]

At the time of Louis's initial retirement, the IRS was still completing its investigation of his prior tax returns, which had always been handled by Mike Jacobs's personal accountant.^[70] In May 1950, the IRS finished a full audit of Louis's past returns and announced that, with interest and penalties, he owed the government more than \$500,000.^[58] Louis had no choice but to return to the ring.

After asking Gibson to take over his personal finances and switching his management from Jacobs and Roxborough to Marshall Miles,^{[50][71]} the Louis camp negotiated a deal with the IRS under which Louis would come out of retirement, with all Louis's net proceeds going to the IRS. A match with **Ezzard Charles**—who had acquired the vacant Heavyweight title in June 1949 by outpointing Walcott—was set for September 27, 1950. By then, Louis was 36 years old and had been away from competitive boxing for two years. Weighing in at 218, Louis was still strong, but his reflexes were gone. Charles repeatedly beat him to the punch. By the end of the fight, Louis was cut above both eyes, one of which was shut tight by swelling.^[50] He knew he had lost even before Charles was declared the winner. The result was not the only disappointing aspect of the fight for Louis; only 22,357 spectators paid to witness the event at Yankee Stadium and his share of the purse was a mere \$100,458.^[50] Louis had to continue fighting.

After facing several club-level opponents, the International Boxing Club guaranteed Louis \$300,000 to face undefeated heavyweight contender **Rocky Marciano** on October 26, 1951.^[58] Despite his being a 6-to-5 favorite, few boxing insiders believed Louis had a chance.^[72] Marciano himself was reluctant to participate in the bout, but was understanding of Louis's position: "This is the last guy on earth I want to fight."^[73] It was feared, particularly among those who had witnessed Marciano's punching power first hand, that Louis's unwillingness to quit would result in serious injury. Fighting back tears, **Ferdie Pacheco** said in the *SportsCentury* documentary about his bout with Marciano, "He [Louis] wasn't just going to lose. He was going to take a vicious, savage beating. Before the eyes of the nation, Joe Louis, an American hero if ever there was one, was going to get beaten up." Louis was dropped in the eighth round by a Marciano left and knocked out of the ring less than thirty seconds later.

In the dressing room after the fight, Louis's Army touring companion, Sugar Ray Robinson, wept. Marciano also attempted to console Louis, saying, "I'm sorry, Joe."^[58] "What's the use of crying?" Louis said. "The better man won. I guess everything happens for the best."^[58]

After facing Marciano, with the prospect of another significant payday all but gone, Louis retired for good from professional boxing. He would, as before, continue to tour on the exhibition circuit, with his last contest taking place on December 16, 1951, in **Taipei, Taiwan**, against Corporal Buford J. deCordova.^{[15][69]}

Taxes and financial troubles [edit]

Despite Louis's lucrative purses over the years, most of the proceeds went to his handlers. Of the over \$4.6 million earned during his boxing career, Louis himself received only about \$800,000.^[15] Louis was nevertheless extremely generous to his family, paying for homes, cars and education for his parents and siblings,^[74] often with money fronted by Jacobs.^[75] He invested in a number of businesses, all of which eventually failed,^[74] including the Joe Louis Restaurant, the Joe Louis Insurance Company, a softball team called the Brown Bombers, Joe Louis Milk Company, Joe Louis pomade (hair grease), Joe Louis Punch (a drink), the Louis-Rower P.R. firm, a horse farm and the **Rhumbogie Café** in Chicago.^[76] He gave liberally to the government as well, paying back the city of Detroit for any welfare money his family had received.^[74]



Louis and **Max Schmeling**, 1971. [edit]
The former rivals became close friends

A combination of this largesse and government intervention eventually put Louis in severe financial straits. His entrusting of his finances to former manager Mike Jacobs haunted him. After the \$500,000 IRS tax bill was assessed, with interest accumulating every year, the need for cash precipitated Louis's post-retirement comeback.^{[58][77]} Even though his comeback earned him significant purses, the incremental tax rate in place at the time (90%) meant that these boxing proceeds did not even keep pace with interest on Louis's tax debt. As a result, by the end of the 1950s, he owed over \$1 million in taxes and interest.^[77] In 1953, when Louis's mother died, the IRS appropriated the \$667 she had willed to Louis.^[58] To bring in money,

in later life

Louis engaged in numerous activities outside the ring. He appeared on various [quiz shows](#),^[77] and an old Army buddy, Ash Resnick, gave Louis a job welcoming tourists to the [Caesars Palace](#) hotel in [Las Vegas](#), where Resnick was an executive.^[77] For income, Louis even became a [professional wrestler](#). He made his professional wrestling debut on March 16, 1956 in Washington, D.C., defeating Cowboy Rocky Lee. After defeating Lee in a few matches, Louis discovered he had a heart ailment and retired from wrestling competition. However, he continued as a wrestling referee until 1972.^{[58][78]}

Louis remained a popular celebrity in his twilight years. His friends included former rival Max Schmeling—who provided Louis with financial assistance during his retirement^[79]—and mobster [Frank Lucas](#), who, disgusted with the government's treatment of Louis, once paid off a \$50,000 tax lien held against him.^[80] These payments, along with an eventual agreement in the early 1960s by the IRS to limit its collections to an amount based on Louis's current income,^[58] allowed Louis to live comfortably toward the end of his life.^[74]

After the [Louis-Schmeling fight](#), [Jack Dempsey](#) expressed the opinion that he was glad he never had to face Joe Louis in the ring. When Louis fell on hard financial times, Dempsey served as honorary chairman of a fund to assist Louis.^[81]

Professional golf [edit]

One of Louis's other passions was the game of golf, in which he also played a historic role. He was a long-time devotee of the sport since being introduced to the game before the first Schmeling fight in 1936. In 1952, Louis was invited to play in the [San Diego Open](#) on a sponsor's exemption, becoming the first African American to play a [PGA Tour](#) event.^[34] Initially, the [PGA of America](#) was reluctant to allow Louis to enter the event, having a bylaw at the time limiting PGA participation to Caucasians.^[6] However, Louis's celebrity status eventually pushed the PGA toward removing the bylaw, paving the way for the first generation of African-American professional golfers such as [Calvin Peete](#).^[6] Louis himself financially supported the careers of several other early black professional golfers, such as [Bill Spiller](#), [Ted Rhodes](#), Howard Wheeler, James Black, Clyde Martin and [Charlie Sifford](#).^[34] He was also instrumental in founding The First Tee, a charity helping underprivileged children become acquainted with the game of golf.^[6] His son, Joe Louis Barrow, Jr., currently oversees the organization.^[34]

In 2009, the [PGA of America](#) granted posthumous membership to [Ted Rhodes](#), [John Shippen](#) and [Bill Spiller](#), who were denied the opportunity to become PGA members during their professional careers. The PGA also has granted posthumous honorary membership to Louis.^[82]

Personal life and death [edit]

Louis had two children by wife Marva Trotter (daughter Jacqueline in 1943 and son Joseph Louis Barrow Jr. in 1947) . They divorced in March 1945 only to remarry a year later, but were again divorced in February 1949.^{[58][83]} Marva moved on to an acting and modeling career.^{[66][84]} On Christmas Day 1955, Louis married Rose Morgan, a successful Harlem businesswoman; their marriage was annulled in 1958.^[83] Louis's final marriage – to Martha Jefferson, a lawyer from [Los Angeles](#), on [St. Patrick's Day](#) 1959 – lasted until his death. They had a child and also named him Joe Jr. The younger Joe Louis Barrow Jr. lives in New York City and is involved in boxing.^{[74][83]}

Though married four times, Louis discreetly enjoyed the company of both African-American and European-American women, including [Lena Horne](#), [Sonja Henie](#) and [Lana Turner](#).^{[23][74]}



Joe Louis with [Jean Anderson](#), Chicago, 1947



Joe Louis' headstone in [Arlington National Cemetery](#), Virginia

In 1940 Louis endorsed and campaigned for Republican [Wendell Willkie](#) for president. Louis said, ""This country has been good to me. It gave me everything I have. I have never come out for any candidate before but I think Wendell L. Willkie will give us a square deal. So I am for Willkie because I think he will help my people, and I figure my people should be for him, too." [3]

In 1953, Robert Gordon directed a movie about Louis's life, *The Joe Louis Story*. The movie, filmed in [Hollywood](#), starred Golden Gloves fighter [Coley Wallace](#) in the role of Louis.^[85]

Starting in the 1960s, Louis was frequently mocked by segments of the African-American community (including [Muhammad Ali](#)) for being an "[Uncle Tom](#)."

Drugs took a toll on Louis in his later years. In 1969, he was hospitalized after collapsing on a New York City street. While the incident was at first credited to "physical breakdown,"^[83] underlying problems would soon surface. In 1970, he spent five months at the Colorado Psychiatric Hospital and the Veterans Administration

Hospital in Denver, hospitalized by his wife, Martha, and his son, Joe Louis Barrow Jr., for paranoia.^[83] In a 1971 book, *Brown Bomber*, by Barney Nagler, Louis disclosed the truth about these incidents, stating that his collapse in 1969 had been caused by cocaine, and that his subsequent hospitalization had been prompted by his fear of a plot to destroy him.^[83] Strokes and heart ailments caused Louis's condition to deteriorate further later in the decade. He had surgery to correct an aortic aneurysm in 1977 and thereafter used an [Amigo](#) POV/scooter for a mobility aid.^{[15][86]}

Louis died of [cardiac arrest](#) in [Desert Springs Hospital](#) near [Las Vegas](#) on April 12, 1981, just hours after his last public appearance viewing the [Larry Holmes-Trevor Berbick](#) Heavyweight Championship. [Ronald Reagan](#) waived the eligibility rules for burial at [Arlington National Cemetery](#) and Louis was buried there with full military honors on April 21,

1981.^{[87][88]} His funeral was paid for in part by former competitor and friend, Max Schmeling,^[89] who also acted as a pallbearer.

Legacy [edit]

In all, Louis made 25 defenses of his Heavyweight title from 1937 to 1948, and was a world champion for 11 years and 10 months. Both are still records in the heavyweight division, the former in any division.^[90] His most remarkable record is that he knocked out 23 opponents in 27 title fights, including 5 world champions.^[91] In addition to his accomplishments inside the ring, Louis uttered two of boxing's most famous observations: "He can run, but he can't hide" and "Everyone has a plan until they've been hit."^{[15][92]}

Louis is also remembered in sports outside of boxing. An indoor sports venue is named after him in Detroit, the **Joe Louis Arena**, where the **Detroit Red Wings** play their **NHL** games.^[93] In 1936, Vince Leah, then a writer for the *Winnipeg Tribune* used Joe Louis's nickname to refer to the Winnipeg Football Club after a game. From that point, the team became known popularly as the **Winnipeg Blue Bombers**.^[94]

His recognition also transcends the sporting world. In 2002, scholar **Molefi Kete Asante** listed Joe Louis on his list of **100 Greatest African Americans**.^[95] On August 26, 1982, Louis was posthumously approved for the **Congressional Gold Medal**, the highest award given to civilians by the U.S. legislative branch.^[96] Congress stated that he "did so much to bolster the spirit of the American people during one of the most crucial times in American history and which have endured throughout the years as a symbol of strength for the nation."^[97] Following Louis' death, President **Ronald Reagan** said, "Joe Louis was more than a sports legend -- his career was an indictment of racial bigotry and a source of pride and inspiration to millions of white and black people around the world."^[98]



Congressional Gold Medal in 1982 [edit]



Detroit Monument [edit]

A **memorial to Louis** was dedicated in Detroit (at Jefferson Avenue & Woodward) on October 16, 1986. The sculpture, commissioned by **Time, Inc.** and executed by **Robert Graham**, is a 24-foot-long (7.3 m) arm with a fist suspended by a 24-foot-high (7.3 m) pyramidal framework. It represents the power of his punch both inside and outside the ring. Because of his efforts to fight Jim Crow laws, the fist was symbolically aimed toward the south.^[99]

In an interview with **Arsenio Hall** in the late 1980s, Muhammad Ali, stated that his two biggest influences in boxing were **Sugar Ray Robinson** and Joe Louis.^[100]

On February 27, 2010, an 8-foot (2.4 m) bronze statue of Louis was unveiled in his Alabama hometown. The statue sits on a base of red granite outside the Chambers County Courthouse.^[101]

In 1993, he became the first boxer to be honored on a postage stamp issued by the U.S. Postal Service.^[102]

Various other facilities have been named after Joe Louis. A street near **Madison Square Garden** is named in his honor. The former Pipe O' Peace Golf Course in **Riverdale, Illinois**, (a Chicago suburb) was in 1986 renamed "Joe Louis The Champ Golf Course."^[103] American Legion Post 375 in Detroit is also named after Joe Louis. Joe Louis Arena, nicknamed The Joe, is a hockey arena located in downtown Detroit, Michigan. It is the home of the Detroit Red Wings of the National Hockey League. Completed in 1979 at a cost of \$57 million, the venue is named after boxer and former heavyweight champion Joe Louis, who grew up in Detroit.

In one of the most widely quoted tributes to Louis, *New York Post* sportswriter **Jimmy Cannon** was known for the following statement (interjecting to another person's characterization of Louis as "a credit to his race"); "Yes, Joe Louis is a credit to his race—the human race."^[104]

Professional record [edit]

66 Wins (52 knockouts, 13 decisions, 1 disqualification), 3 Losses (2 knockouts, 1 decision), 1 No Contest ^[105]							
Res.	Record	Opponent	Type	Round	Date	Location	Notes
Loss	66–3–(1)	 Rocky Marciano	TKO	8 (10)	26/10/1951	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	
Win	66–2–(1)	 Jimmy Bivins	UD	10	15/08/1951	 Memorial Stadium, Baltimore, Maryland, United States	
Win	65–2–(1)	 Cesar Brion	UD	10	01/08/1951	 Cow Palace, San Francisco, California, United States	
Win	64–2–(1)	 Lee Savold	KO	6 (15)	15/06/1951	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	
Win	63–2–(1)	 Omelio Agramonte	UD	10	02/05/1951	 Olympia Stadium, Detroit, Michigan, United States	
Win	62–2–(1)	 Andy Walker	TKO	10 (10)	23/02/1951	 Cow Palace, San Francisco, California, United States	
Win	61–2–(1)	 Omelio Agramonte	UD	10	07/02/1951	 Miami Stadium, Miami, Florida, United States	

Win	60–2 (1)	 Freddie Beshore	TKO	4 (10)	03/01/1951	 Olympia Stadium, Detroit, Michigan, United States	
Win	59–2 (1)	 Cesar Brion	UD	10	29/11/1950	 Chicago Stadium, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Loss	58–2 (1)	 Ezzard Charles	UD	15	27/09/1950	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	For World Heavyweight title.
NC	58–1 (1)	 Johnny Shkor	ND	10	14/11/1949	 Boston Garden, Boston, Massachusetts, United States	
Win	58–1	 Jersey Joe Walcott	KO	11 (15)	25/06/1948	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title. Louis announced his retirement on March 1, 1949.
Win	57–1	 Jersey Joe Walcott	SD	15	05/12/1947	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	56–1	 Tami Mauriello	KO	1 (15)	18/09/1946	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	55–1	 Billy Conn	KO	8 (15)	19/06/1946	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	54–1	 Johnny Davis	TKO	1 (4)	14/11/1944	 Memorial Auditorium, Buffalo, New York, United States	Heavyweight title at stake per NYSAC ruling.
Win	53–1	 Abe Simon	TKO	6 (15)	27/03/1942	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	52–1	 Buddy Baer	KO	1 (15)	09/01/1942	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	51–1	 Lou Nova	TKO	6 (15)	29/09/1941	 Polo Grounds, New York, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	50–1	 Billy Conn	KO	13 (15)	18/06/1941	 Polo Grounds, New York, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title. 1941 <i>Fight of the Year</i> by <i>The Ring Magazine</i> .
Win	49–1	 Buddy Baer	DQ	7 (15)	23/05/1941	 Griffith Stadium, District of Columbia, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	48–1	 Tony Musto	TKO	9 (15)	08/04/1941	 Arena, St. Louis, Missouri, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	47–1	 Abe Simon	TKO	13 (20)	21/03/1941	 Olympia Stadium, Detroit, Michigan, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	46–1	 Gus Dorazio	KO	2 (15)	17/02/1941	 Convention Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	45–1	 Red Burman	KO	5 (15)	31/01/1941	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	44–1	 Al McCoy	TKO	6 (15)	16/12/1940	 Boston Garden, Boston, Massachusetts, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	43–1	 Arturo Godoy	TKO	8 (15)	20/06/1940	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	42–1	 Johnny Paychek	TKO	2 (15)	29/03/1940	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	41–1	 Arturo Godoy	SD	15	09/02/1940	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	40–1	 Bob Pastor	KO	11 (20)	20/09/1939	 Briggs Stadium, Detroit, Michigan, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title. 1939 <i>Fight of the Year</i> by <i>The Ring Magazine</i> .
Win	39–1	 Tony Galento	TKO	4 (15)	28/06/1939	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	38–1	 Jack Roper	KO	1 (10)	17/04/1939	 Wrigley Field, Los Angeles, California, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	37–1	 John Henry Lewis	KO	1 (15)	25/01/1939	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	36–1	 Max Schmeling	KO	1 (15)	22/06/1938	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title. Proclaimed the "Fight of the Decade" by <i>The Ring Magazine</i> .
Win	35–1	 Harry Thomas	KO	5 (15)	01/04/1938	 Chicago Stadium, Chicago, Illinois, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	34–1	 Nathan Mann	KO	3 (15)	23/02/1938	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title.
Win	33–1	 Tommy Farr	UD	15	30/08/1937	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	Retained World Heavyweight title. 1937 <i>Fight of the Year</i> by <i>The Ring Magazine</i> .
Win	32–1	 James Braddock	KO	8 (15)	22/06/1937	 Comiskey Park, Chicago, Illinois, United States	Won World Heavyweight title.

Win	31–1	 Natie Brown	KO	4 (10)	17/02/1937	 Municipal Auditorium, Kansas City, Missouri, United States	
Win	30–1	 Bob Pastor	UD	10	29/01/1937	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	
Win	29–1	 Steve Ketchel	KO	2 (4)	11/01/1937	 Broadway Auditorium, Buffalo, New York, United States	
Win	28–1	 Eddie Simms	TKO	1 (10)	14/12/1936	 Public Hall, Cleveland, Ohio, United States	
Win	27–1	 Jorge Brescia	KO	3 (10)	09/10/1936	 Hippodrome, New York, New York, United States	
Win	26–1	 Al Ettore	KO	5 (15)	22/09/1936	 Municipal Stadium, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States	
Win	25–1	 Jack Sharkey	KO	3 (10)	18/08/1936	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	
Loss	24–1	 Max Schmeling	KO	12 (15)	19/06/1936	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	1936 Fight of the Year by <i>The Ring Magazine</i> .
Win	24–0	 Charley Retzlaff	KO	1 (15)	17/01/1936	 Chicago Stadium, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	23–0	 Paulino Uzcudun	TKO	4 (15)	13/12/1935	 Madison Square Garden, New York, New York, United States	
Win	22–0	 Max Baer	KO	4 (15)	24/09/1935	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	1935 Fight of the Year by <i>The Ring Magazine</i> .
Win	21–0	 King Levinsky	TKO	1 (10)	07/08/1935	 Comiskey Park, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	20–0	 Primo Camera	TKO	6 (15)	25/06/1935	 Yankee Stadium, Bronx, New York, United States	
Win	19–0	 Biff Bennett	KO	1 (6)	22/04/1935	 Memorial Hall, Dayton, Ohio, United States	
Win	18–0	 Roy Lazer	KO	3 (10)	12/04/1935	 Chicago Stadium, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	17–0	 Natie Brown	UD	10	29/03/1935	 Olympia Stadium, Detroit, Michigan, United States	
Win	16–0	 Don "Red" Barry	TKO	3 (10)	08/03/1935	 Dreamland Auditorium, San Francisco, California, United States	
Win	15–0	 Lee Ramage	TKO	2 (10)	21/02/1935	 Wrigley Field, Los Angeles, California, United States	
Win	14–0	 Hans Birkie	TKO	10 (10)	11/01/1935	 Duquesne Gardens, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States	
Win	13–0	 Patsy Perroni	PTS	10	04/01/1935	 Olympia Stadium, Detroit, Michigan, United States	
Win	12–0	 Lee Ramage	TKO	8 (10)	14/12/1934	 Chicago Stadium, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	11–0	 Charley Massera	KO	3 (10)	30/11/1934	 Coliseum, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	10–0	 Stanley Poreda	KO	1 (10)	14/11/1934	 Arcadia Gardens, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	9–0	 Jack O'Dowd	KO	2 (10)	31/10/1934	 Arcadia Gardens, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	8–0	 Art Sykes	KO	8 (10)	24/10/1934	 Arcadia Gardens, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	7–0	 Adolph Wiater	PTS	10	26/09/1934	 Arcadia Gardens, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	6–0	 Al Delaney	TKO	4 (10)	11/09/1934	 Naval Armory, Detroit, Michigan, United States	
Win	5–0	 Buck Everett	KO	2 (8)	27/08/1934	 Marigold Gardens Outdoor Arena, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	4–0	 Jack Kranz	UD	8	13/08/1934	 Marigold Gardens Outdoor Arena, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	3–0	 Larry Udell	TKO	2 (8)	30/07/1934	 Marigold Gardens Outdoor Arena, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	2–0	 Willie Davies	TKO	3 (6)	12/07/1934	 Bacon's Arena, Chicago, Illinois, United States	
Win	1–0	 Jack Kracken	KO	1 (6)	04/07/1934	 Bacon's Arena, Chicago, Illinois, United States	

Cultural references [[edit](#)]

- In his heyday, Louis was the subject of many musical tributes, including a number of blues songs.^[106]
- Louis played a boxer in the 1938 race film *Spirit of Youth*.
- In the television series *M*A*S*H*, Hawkeye Pierce says he enjoyed his childhood because "You knew where you stood in those days. Roosevelt was always the president and Joe Louis was always the champ."
- In the 1988 movie *Coming to America*, Eddie Murphy's character Clarence states that Frank Sinatra once told him that Joe Louis was 137 years old, supposedly his age when he lost to Rocky Marciano.^[107]
- Louis is also mentioned in the song "Save me Joe Louis" by Curtis Eller's American Circus from the album *Wirewalkers and Assassins*.
- Louis is played by actor Bari K. Willerford in the film *American Gangster*.
- In 2009, the Brooklyn band *Yeasayer* debuted the single "Ambling Alp" from their forthcoming album *Odd Blood*, which imagines what advice Joe Louis's father might have given him prior to becoming a prizefighter. The song makes reference to Louis' boxing career and his famous rivalry with Schmeling in the first person, with the lyrics such as "Oh, Max Schmeling was a formidable foe / The Ambling Alp was too, at least that's what I'm told / But if you learn one thing, you've learned it well / In June, you must give fascists hell."^{[108][109]}
- An opera based on his life, *Shadowboxer*, premiered on 17 April 2010.^[110]
- The aforementioned sculpture of Louis's fist (see *Legacy* above) was one of several Detroit landmarks depicted in "Imported from Detroit," a two-minute commercial for the *Chrysler 200* featuring *Eminem* that aired during *Super Bowl XLV* in 2011.
- Joe Louis' name is well known in Quebec, Canada because of the snack cake *Jos. Louis* made by the *Vachon's* family. Although similar in name, the snack did not get its name from Joe Louis. The snack cake is named after two of the Vachon sons, Joseph and Louis.^[111]
- Louis is the inspiration behind Jesse Jagz's "Louis", a song from the rapper's third studio album *Jagz Nation Vol. 2: Royal Niger Company* (2014).^[112]

See also [edit]

- List of heavyweight boxing champions



Notes [edit]

- ↑ *a b c d e f g h i j* Deardorff, Il, Don (October 1, 1995). "Joe Louis became both a black hero and a national symbol to whites after overcoming racism in the media" . *St. Louis Journalism Review*.
- ↑ *a b* Libby, p. 61.
- ↑ Webarchive of International Boxing Research Organization **he has 19 gold medals, 8 silver, and 3 bronze** (March 2005). "All Time Rankings" . Archived from the original on July 7, 2007. Retrieved June 19, 2009.
- ↑ "Joe Louis (1914-1981)" . *The American Experience The Fight*. Public Broadcasting System. September 22, 2004. Retrieved June 24, 2012.
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- Video of 1941 Louis-Conn Title Fight
- Video of 1951 Louis-Charles Fight
- Video of 1951 Louis-Marciano Fight
- Professional boxing record for Joe Louis from BoxRec
- Joe Louis Amateur Record from BoxArec
- The Fight of the Century NPR special on the selection of the radio broadcast to the National Recording Registry
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Preceded by Jack Dempsey	Youngest Heavyweight Champion June 22, 1937 – November 30, 1956	Succeeded by Floyd Patterson
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1931: **Pepper Martin** · 1932: **Gene Sarazen** · 1933: **Carl Hubbell** · 1934: **Dizzy Dean** · 1935: **Joe Louis** · 1936: **Jesse Owens** · 1937: **Don Budge** · 1938: **Don Budge** · 1939: **Nile Kinnick** · 1940: **Tom Harmon** · 1941: **Joe DiMaggio** · 1942: **Frank Sinkwich** · 1943: **Gunder Hägg** · 1944: **Byron Nelson** · 1945: **Byron Nelson** · 1946: **Glenn Davis** · 1947: **Johnny Lujack** · 1948: **Lou Boudreau** · 1949: **Leon Hart** · 1950: **Jim Konstanty** · 1951: **Dick Kazmaier** · 1952: **Bob Mathias** · 1953: **Ben Hogan** · 1954: **Willie Mays** · 1955: **Howard Cassady** · 1956: **Mokey Mantle** · 1957: **Ted Williams** · 1958: **Herb Elliot** · 1959: **Ingemar Johansson** · 1960: **Rafer Johnson** · 1961: **Roger Maris** · 1962: **Maury Wills** · 1963: **Sandy Koufax** · 1964: **Don Schollander** · 1965: **Sandy Koufax** · 1966: **Frank Robinson** · 1967: **Carl Yastrzemski** · 1968: **Denny McLain** · 1969: **Tom Seaver** · 1970: **George Blanda** · 1971: **Lee Trevino** · 1972: **Mark Spitz** · 1973: **O. J. Simpson** · 1974: **Muhammad Ali** · 1975: **Fred Lynn** · 1976: **Bruce Jenner** · 1977: **Steve Cauthen** · 1978: **Ron Guidry** · 1979: **Willie Stargell** · 1980: **U.S. Olympic Hockey Team** · 1981: **John McEnroe** · 1982: **Wayne Gretzky** · 1983: **Carl Lewis** · 1984: **Carl Lewis** · 1985: **Dwight Gooden** · 1986: **Larry Bird** · 1987: **Ben Johnson** · 1988: **Orel Hershiser** · 1989: **Joe Montana** · 1990: **Joe Montana** · 1991: **Michael Jordan** · 1992: **Michael Jordan** · 1993: **Michael Jordan** · 1994: **George Foreman** · 1995: **Cal Ripken, Jr.** · 1996: **Michael Johnson** · 1997: **Tiger Woods** · 1998: **Mark McGwire** · 1999: **Tiger Woods** · 2000: **Tiger Woods** · 2001: **Barry Bonds** · 2002: **Lance Armstrong** · 2003: **Lance Armstrong** · 2004: **Lance Armstrong** · 2005: **Lance Armstrong** · 2006: **Tiger Woods** · 2007: **Tom Brady** · 2008: **Michael Phelps** · 2009: **Jimmie Johnson** · 2010: **Drew Brees** · 2011: **Aaron Rodgers** · 2012: **Michael Phelps** · 2013: **LeBron James** ·

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