Boxing Sportblog

Richard Williams

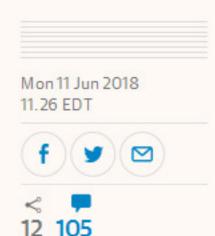
The unbeaten heavyweight champion's first professional fight

under his own name was 70 years ago. Looking back at his

career is a palate-cleanser after Fury's farce in Manchester

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The undisputed: what would Rocky Marciano have made of Tyson Fury?

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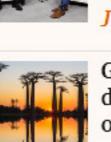
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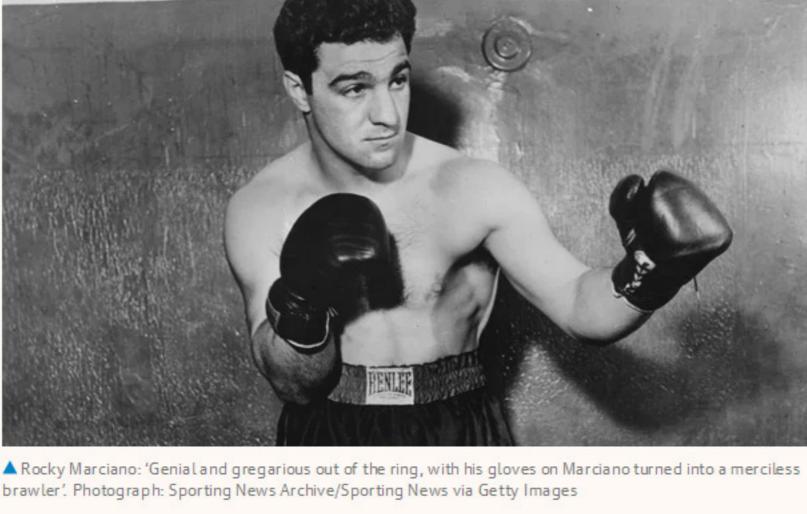
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Trump is a bully who thought Canada was weak. He was wrong about us Jen Gerson



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Manchester on Saturday night, Tyson Fury proclaimed he will

year. What Rocky Marciano would have made of that boast can only be imagined. Seventy years ago next month the heavyweight champion who would finish his career with a record of 49 wins and no defeats fought for the first time as a professional under his own name. A local paper mangled it in their report, however, and Rocco "Rocky" Marchegiano was given the name by which the

world would come to know him. He won that fight - against Henry Bilzarian, the US Army's lightheavyweight champion - with a stoppage after 92 seconds. A pattern had been set. Before 1948 was out he would meet 10 further opponents, none of whom would take him beyond the third round and seven of whom would

Tyson Fury dismisses Tony

fall in the first. Marciano received \$40 for the Bilzarian fight. Ten years later he would turn down \$2m to make a comeback. In between he accumulated a decent fortune for himself - which, not trusting banks, he stashed away in shopping bags full of \$100 bills under floorboards, false ceilings and other places that remained a secret to his family after his death.

Email address Sign up Sign up to The Recap, our weekly email of editors' picks. He made a much bigger fortune for the Mob. His manager, Al Weill, was connected to the International Boxing Club of New York, which controlled

interests, overt or undeclared, in many fighters. "You're another Italian boy, aren't you?" Carbo asked Marciano when they were introduced outside Stillman's gym in New York City - "the University of Eighth Avenue", as the writer AJ Liebling called it. "Kid, make me proud of you."

The Mob loved Marciano and it was, for the most part, a comfortable and

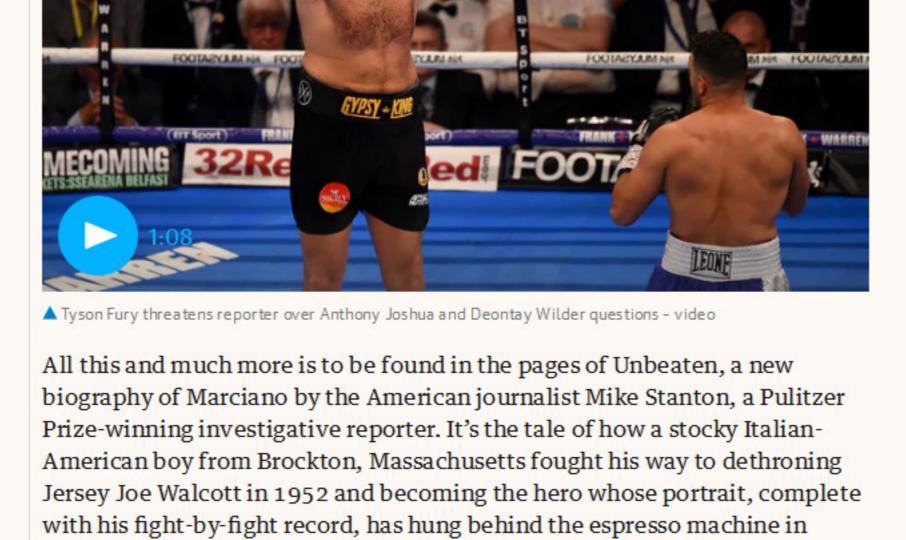
mutually profitable arrangement. The fighter eventually objected to Weill

augmenting his 50% of his earnings by skimming the take and

the sport throughout the 1950s. The IBC was eventually revealed to have

links with such figures as Frankie Carbo and Blinky Palermo, mobsters with

surreptitiously selling ringside seats for his own profit, but in retirement his business ventures included investments in casinos and vending machines with underworld figures of varying degrees of eminence.



stylist whose ferocious right-hand punches were thrown from the solid platform provided by his powerful legs. Genial and gregarious out of the ring, with his gloves on he turned into a merciless brawler whose appetite for destruction drew star-studded audiences including Elizabeth Taylor, Frank Sinatra, J Edgar Hoover and General Douglas MacArthur. The first fight against Walcott, in September 1952, was a 13-round classic in which Marciano was sent to the canvas for the first time in his career. The

first of his two meetings with Ezzard Charles in 1954 became another epic,

going the full 15 rounds in Yankee Stadium. His monastic preparation in the

Catskills had included turning down Jayne Mansfield when the actress paid

There is a childhood memory from May 1955 of being roused at 4am to join

my father in listening to the BBC Light Programme's live radio broadcast

Standing only 5ft 10in and weighing around 185lb, Marciano was a crude

Soho's Bar Italia for as long as anyone can remember.

an unscheduled visit to his cabin.

from San Francisco's Kezar Stadium of Marciano's penultimate fight, against Don Cockell, the British and European champion. The challenger was mocked by American reporters for resembling a tub of the ice cream on which he had allegedly been gorging since arriving in California, but surviving film shows the former blacksmith from Battersea fended off a vicious barrage - including headbutts and blows below the belt and after the bell - with sheer dumb courage until the inevitable ninth-round stoppage.

As the author of Unbeaten relates, Marciano had a bit of history with Britain.

In the summer of 1944, while stationed outside Bristol as a private with the 348th Engineer Combat Battalion of the US Army, preparing for the amphibious assaults of D-Day, he and a friend were arrested for assaulting and robbing a pair of Englishmen with whom they had been drinking. A court martial sentenced him to hard labour, served back home until he was discharged at the end of 1946. His final fight, against the great Archie Moore in Yankee Stadium on 21 September 1955, was another epic, a savagely fluctuating affair that ended in a ninth-round knockout. And that was it. The following April, after

a long South American holiday and the start of an investigation into the IBC,

he called a press conference - dignified and free of bullshit - to announce his

retirement. A dozen years later, on the night before his 46th birthday, he was

There had been a few easy fights on the way up but nothing that sank to the

heavyweight champion has matched Marciano's record of going through a

depths plumbed by Fury and Sefer Seferi on Saturday. No subsequent

career without defeat. In the verdict of history, as well as that of generations of regulars at Bar Italia, his title was as undisputed as undisputed gets. Since you're here we have a small favour to ask. More people are reading the Guardian than ever but advertising revenues across the media are falling fast. And unlike

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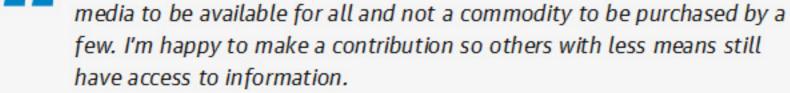
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ninianpark 2h ago Firstly to be clear that circus main event on Saturday was embarrassing inside and outside the ring. However the undercard was decent... Warren probably realised it would have to be. Fury can pipe down until he fights a top 10 heavy he looked woeful. However Marcianos reputation is entirely founded on his unbeaten record. His was a

the previous eras too. Add in the mob running boxing back then.

Threads Collapsed -

through a career without defeat.

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word farce used to describe it, but frankly, what did anyone expect? The dude held a noddy belt, so that should be taken into account, but the main thing is that fury hadn't had a fight in about 3 years. The guy had more pedigree than some of the cab drivers Joshua has fought tbh and it's beside the point - this was never a serious

aren't many boxers out there who can stand toe to toe with fury, let alone nose to

No subsequent heavyweight champion has matched Marciano's record of going

OK fine but all the top heavies of subsequent eras would have beat him and some in

Report

2 1

nose. The guys a giant. That's why most of the division look like pussy cats in the ring with him. People can whinge about quitting on the stool, but try taking a few of furys jabs and see how you feel yourself before being so quick to dismiss the raw power a 6ft 9, 20 stone fury can land with what might look like a soft shot, because you'd better believe it'll sting. Hopefully furys next few fights will be more entertaining. Marciano is a legend with one of the most lethal stepping overhand rights the world has ever seen, but apart from there being a new book out about him, what's all this jibber jabber about what Marciano would have thought? The guy comes from a time of boxing being run behind the scenes by mobsters... He wouldn't bat an eyelid because he's no doubt seen much worse. → Reply < Share</p> Report

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occupants of the £100 ringside seats than inside the ropes in

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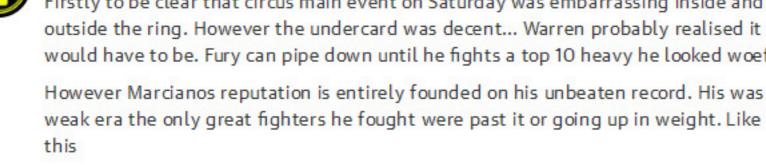
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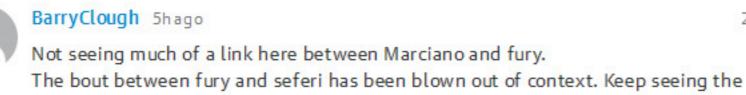
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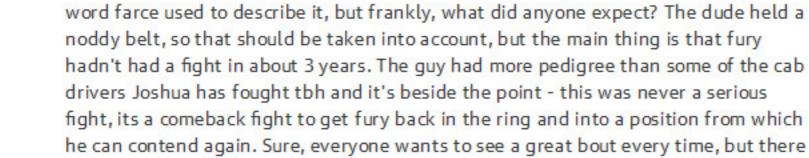
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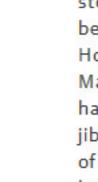
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