

Welcome to Sixth Edition of the Boxing Biographies Newsletter

Saturday, 25 August 2007

Each new edition we will feature one of the fighters from our new and fast growing web site which, unlike any other site, provides fistic fans with the actual fight reports as published in the press from 1850 to present day. Whenever possible they will be reproduced along with the photographs used in the original article so readers get a real taste of some of the rich history of the Noble Science across the years. In addition we also provide wide range of articles written especially for the site by our small team of in house staff. Please visit our site you will not be disappointed and we look forward to your comments and suggestions on how we may make improvements to the site.

Many thanks Rob Snell, Manos & Grim.X

www.boxingbiographies.com please visit our parent site www.worldboxingforums.com

If you wish to receive future newsletters please email the message "NEWS LETTER"
michael.snell1@ntlworld.com

In the history of boxing there are few people who have generated as much controversy during his life as Jack Johnson. I would suggest that as much as the American public loved John L. Sullivan they loathed Jack Johnson with equal, if not more, passion. The following material is reproduced in full on the web site.

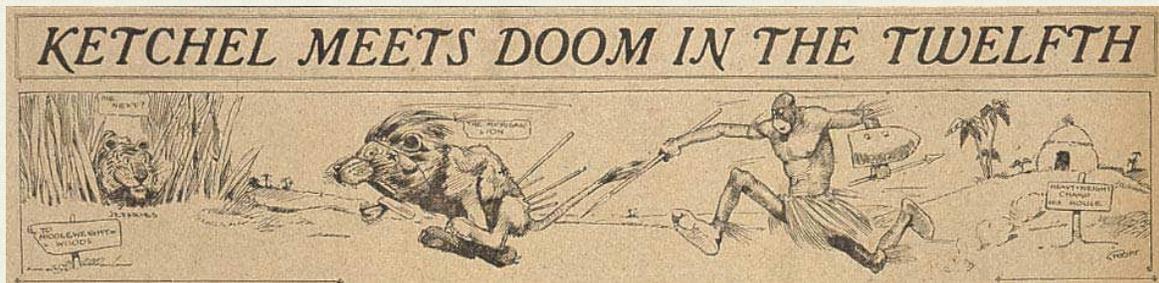
WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION AND DEMOLISHER OF "THE WHITE HOPE" (1878-1946)



WHEN STEVE BRODIE dived from the Brooklyn Bridge in 1886, his name reached into a wretched Negro cabin in Galveston, Texas, and so stirred a ragged Negro boy of twelve that he made up his mind to go to New York and meet Brodie in person. This flash of fancy, little as the black boy could have guessed it, was to lead him to the world's heavyweight championship, the most highly prized athletic honor since Onomastros won the belt at the thirteenth Olympic Games in 880 B.C.

The boy, John Arthur Johnson, L'il Arth'uh, as he was known to his companions, tried to stow away on a ship bound for New York, but was caught and put off. Finally, after several weeks he succeeded, but soon after the ship left, he was put off at Key West, where he found work as a sponge fisher in the shark-infested waters, and had a narrow escape from being eaten alive.

Boarding another ship, he was caught soon after it left port and handed over to the tender mercies of the cook, who worked him and beat him. Some kindhearted passengers rescued him and paid for his passage to New York, where he met Brodie, who befriended him for a while. He next found work in a stable in Boston, but while exercising a horse, it fell on him and broke his leg. While in the hospital he made friends who paid his passage back to Galveston, where he went to work on the docks. Here he met rowdy youths and crapshooters with whom he had fistfights, in some of which he was beaten. Finally, he whipped the bully of the docks, who was bigger and older than himself, and thus became the "champion." Leaving the docks, he went to work with a carriage painter, who was an amateur boxer and got him into fights whenever he could until he was the best boxer in the city, a reputation he was to retain in a fight with a grown man in a quarrel over dice. This man was so much bigger, stronger, and tougher than Johnson that his victory became the talk of the neighborhood and made him decide to become a professional boxer.



Jack Johnson, the first black heavyweight champion, whose reign lasted from 1908 to 1915, was also the first African American pop culture icon. He was photographed more than any other black man of his day and, indeed, more than most white men. He was written about more as well. Black people during the early 20th century were hardly the subject of news in the white press unless they were the perpetrators of crime or had been lynched (usually for a crime, real or imaginary). Johnson was different—not only was he written about in black newspapers but he was, during his heyday, not infrequently the subject of front pages of white papers. As his career developed, he was subject of scrutiny from the white press, in part because he was accused and convicted of a crime, but also because he was champion athlete in a sport with a strong national following.

Not even the most famous race leaders of the day, Booker T. Washington, president of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, and W. E. B. Du Bois, founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and editor of that organization's magazine, *The Crisis*, could claim anywhere near the attention Johnson received. Not even the most famous black entertainers and artists of the day—musical stage comics George Walker and Bert Walker, or bandleader James Reese Europe, or ragtime composer Scott Joplin, or fiction writer Charles W. Chesnutt, or painter Henry O. Tanner—received Johnson's attention. In fact, it would be safe to say that while Johnson was heavyweight champion, he was covered more in the press than all other notable black men combined.

And, like the true pop culture figure, the way Johnson lived his life and, particularly, the way he conducted his sex life mattered a great deal to the public. He was scandal, he was gossip, he was a public menace for many, a public hero for some, admired and demonized,

feared, misunderstood, and ridiculed. Johnson emerged as a major figure in the world of sports at the turn of the century when sports themselves, both collegiate and professional, were becoming a significant force in American cultural life and as the role of black people in sports was changing. Johnson arrived at a time when the machinery of American popular culture, as we know it today, was being put into place. Recorded music, which was to change entirely how music was made, sold, and distributed in the United States, came into being at this time. Movies were well established as a popular medium of entertainment at the time when Johnson became a big enough name in boxing to fight for a world title. Indeed, films were an important way for promoters and fighters to make money in boxing by showing the films of bouts in movie theaters. Boxing was, by far, the most filmed sport of its day.

The automobile, which became Johnson's great passion and the most celebrated piece of technology connected with popular culture, was part of the brave new world of the early 1900s, replacing the bicycle. And, along with this came the rise of spectator sports, which changed how Americans spent their leisure time: baseball was a long-standing craze, college football was growing in popularity, basketball had been invented. There was also track and field, the modern return of the Olympic Games, golf, tennis, bicycle racing, race walking, horse racing, and probably the most popular of all sports at the time, professional boxing or, as it was commonly called, prizefighting.

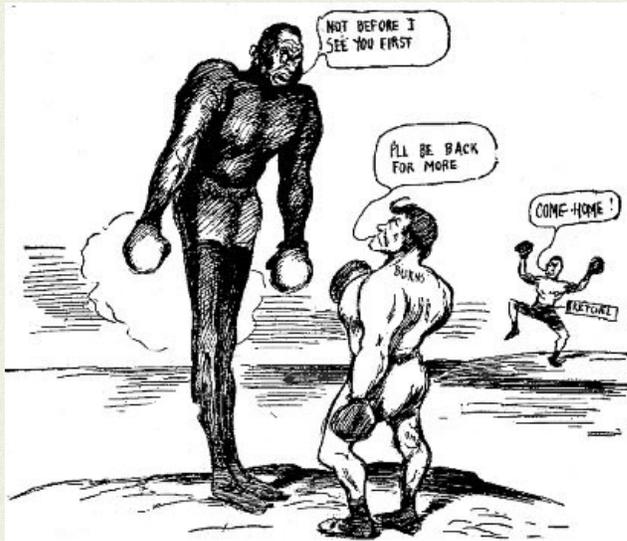


New York Times
26 December 1908

Negro's Punishment of Champion Burns Causes Authorities to End Bout.

**DECIDED ON POINTS
of Saturday Morning's Battle In Australia Received Last Night
in New York. Heavyweight Championship Fight,**

SYDNEY, Saturday noon, Dec. 26.



Jack Johnson, the big negro from Galveston, Texas is the world's champion, heavyweight pugilist. He won the title to-day in the big arena at Ruscutters Bay from Tommy Burns, the French-Canadian, who had held it since James J. Jeffries relinquished it, and after a chase of Burns that had led half way round the world.

The end came in the fourteenth round when the police, seeing Burns tottering and unable to defend himself from the savage blows of his opponent, mercifully stopped the

fight. Previously it had been arranged that if the police interfered a decision should be rendered on points, and referee McIntosh without hesitation declared the big black man the winner, for all through the fight he had shown himself Burns's master in every style of fighting.

Burns in an interview after he had gone To his dressing room said: "I did the best I could and fought hard. Johnson was too big and his reach was too great."

Johnson appeared fresh after the fight, while Burns's eyes were badly puffed and his mouth swollen to twice its normal size. The Canadian fought a game battle and showed Indomitable pluck, but he was no match for the big- black Texan. The fight was for a purse of \$35,000 of which Burns received \$30,000" and Johnson £5,000. The ring was a 24-foot one, and Was pitched In the centre of a big arena built especially for the purpose at Rushcutters Bay. The bout was to have been for twenty rounds. The day dawned overcast and cool.

Thousands of persons from all parts of the country were attracted to the scene of the encounter, and many reached there Christmas night and slept in the open. .They came by street cars, automobiles, carriages, and on horseback, and at 10 o'clock this morning, one hour before the fight was scheduled to start, every seat was occupied. The crowd was

estimated at between 18,000 and 20,000 persons, and It kept perfect order throughout the fight.

Before the contestants entered the ring, " Bill " Squires, who thrice has been defeated by Burns, challenged the winner. Burns weighed in at 108 pounds and Johnson at 192. The betting was 7 to 4 on Burns at the start, but it veered after a few rounds to 2 to 1 on Johnson. The spectators conceded that Johnson's victory was due to his physical advantages over burns, his superior knowledge of the fighting game, and his unruffled demeanor while being taunted by the champion. The stakes were paid the men while they were in the ring.

At 10:42 o'clock Johnson entered the arena accompanied by his seconds, Sam Fitzpatrick, Mullins, Unholz, Lang, and 'Bryant. Wild cheering greeted him and the big black man turned and bowed to all four sides of the ring.

Just as Johnson took his seat Burns appeared. He was smiling and the plaudits of the spectators were even more enthusiastic than those accorded Johnson. Burns took up his position in the western corner of the ring surrounded by his seconds, Keating, O'Keefe, O'Donnell, Burke, and Russell. When the cheering had died down somewhat Johnson crossed over and shook Burns by the hand. The Canadian glanced at the big hands of the Texan and noticed that both were covered with bandages. Fearful that perhaps they might not be of the soft kind, he scrutinized them closely, but finding them to his satisfaction he made no objection. The announcement was made that if during the contest the police should interfere and stop it the referee would immediately give a decision based on points scored.

When Burns stripped it was noticed that he wore elastic bandages about his elbows. Johnson shouted across the ring half angrily: " You must take those off." Then the men met in the centre of the ring and for a few minutes argued the question. Then they retired again to their corners, but Burns did not remove the bandages.

From Johnson's seconds came the announcement that their man refused to fight unless Burns took off the wraps around his elbows, and it looked as though there was a possibility of the fight not taking place, for Burns was stubborn and Johnson insistent on his point. The referee, however, here took a hand in the controversy and said that the wearing of bandages was not against the rules. Johnson still demurred, nevertheless, and Burns, with a show of impatience, had his seconds unwind the tape. His action brought forth from the spectators a tremendous round of applause.

At 11:15 o'clock Johnson and Burns posed for a moving picture machine, and, having received final instructions from Referee McIntosh, retired to their corners. Then the battle began.