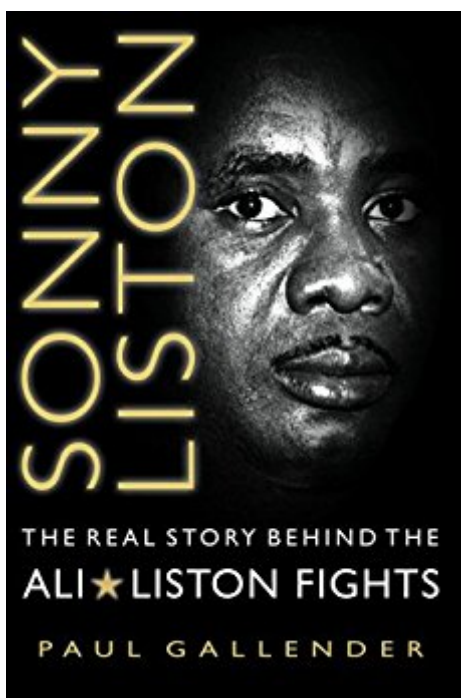


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Sonny Liston - The Real Story Behind The Ali-Liston Fights



Synopsis

Sonny Liston! The former heavyweight champ's name conjures up memories of invincibility, power, and awe, but more than anything else it suggests mystery. Who was this intimidating man and what really caused his precipitous fall from the pinnacle of the sports world? Paul Gallender's revealing new biography, *Sonny Liston - The Real Story Behind the Ali-Liston Fights*, sheds new light on Liston's tragic life and extraordinary career. In meticulous detail the author shows why the outcomes of Sonny's two bouts with Muhammad Ali had far more to do with what took place outside of the ring than in it. The truth about their one-round fight in Lewiston, Maine, will shock and dismay you. When Sonny was forced to lie down against Ali in that fight, his reputation, legacy and ultimately his future, went down with him. A largely white sporting press despised and feared Liston and was only too happy to demean and forget him after the Ali bouts. Because of the media's unrelenting negative attacks, most of what the world knows about Sonny has little basis in fact. Sonny's immense talent has been largely forgotten but it has never been equaled. Half a century ago, he was to boxing what Babe Ruth was to baseball and what Tiger Woods became to golf. The legendary Joe Louis called Liston the greatest heavyweight champion in history. Paul Gallender introduces you to a man who, while not a saint, had a sense of fairness and depth of character that was acknowledged for the most part only by family, friends and children of every race. Once you start reading this book you won't want to put it down.

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Customer Reviews

Sonny Liston was the biggest and baddest Heavyweight fighter of them all. He had a jackhammer jab, a left hook that had KO written all over it, and he was generally impervious to opponent's punches. He dominated the heavyweights from 1956-1964 (up until Clay). Yet, because of his lurid prison past, the sportswriters disliked him and he never got his "due" as a truly great heavyweight champion. Well, author Paul Gallender tries to right this wrong with his excellent book on Liston. He argues that Liston was not the thug that most writers made him out to be. He makes a fair case of showing the "softer" side of Liston, but from my perspective, the evidence is pretty thin that Liston was anybody's boy scout. Whenever the name Liston comes up in boxing talk, fans want to know the answers to these three questions: 1. Did Liston quit due to a legit injury in the first Clay fight, or was he told to quit? 2. Why did Liston throw the second Clay/Ali fight? 3. How did Liston really die? While the author adequately and convincingly answers question #1, it is apparent that he sheds no definitive light on the next two questions. Yes, he has theories, but he offers no more than any other book on these last two issues. And for me, this is the reason I purchased the book - to learn more about the dive with Ali and his "mysterious" death. Gallender disappoints on these last two points. Overall, Gallender makes a fine case for considering Liston one of the greatest heavies ever, and posits that only Ali could have beaten him. After reading this book, I tend to agree. I devoured this book in one day. It is a very different look at Liston, although I believe his favorable presentation of Liston is quite biased. The author downplays Liston's assault on a St. Louis policeman and his conviction for armed robbery, as well as his numerous arrests. Did the police harass Liston? Yes indeed. Was Liston treated unfairly by the press - most likely. Was Sonny Liston a saint? Boxing fans will enjoy this unique look at the Big Bear, Charles "Sonny" Liston.

Sonny Liston had one of the saddest lives imaginable. This book shows the many sides of Sonny Liston. I was a kid when Sonny was going to fight Floyd Patterson and everybody was talking about it. People treated Sonny horribly. A lot of writers wrote bad things about him then thought he was a moody when they talked to him. They called him a criminal, thug, animal, convict and mafia associate. At that time boxing was run by the mob and all fighters had dealings with them. Many

things are addressed here like the Patterson fight, his childhood, Ali escapades and fights and his real age. It's too bad he did not have enough REAL FRIENDS. His true love was his kindness to children which makes him a good man.

Great book. Lots of inside information. Although a huge, lifelong boxing fan and ex-sportswriter, it contained lots of details about Sonny Liston I was unaware of. For example, Liston was born in 1917 -- making him 47 and 48 when he fought Ali. Despite his short time as champ, Sonny was the best of all time -- which Joe Louis said. I rank Liston second only to Louis. If the rematch with Muhammad Ali had not been postponed due to Ali's hernia problem, Liston -- who was in top shape -- would have destroyed him. What a shame. The author explains that Sonny ended up taking a dive in the rematch when the lives of his family were threatened. As Louis said, Ali's phony knockout punch "was like throwing corn flakes at a battleship." I once had the privilege of interviewing Liston during Christmas week in 1962 when he visited crippled kids at Milwaukee Children's Hospital. He was very gracious.

This is a really good book and I think should be read along with Bob Mee's "Ali and Liston" if you want a really good review of the Ali-Liston fights and especially a inside look at Sonny Liston. I found this book more readable than Mee's book. On the other side of the coin I think Gallender had a clear bias to try to elevate the status of Sonny Liston which he makes clear even in his dedication of the book to Liston. While I found this book to be a very enjoyable read I have to strongly contest as a boxing historian the theory that Liston threw the second fight because his son was kidnapped. There is really NO evidence to support this other than a few quotes Gallender attributes to Joe Louis's wife Martha and builds from there. This theory has appeared nowhere else and is what makes this book unique, however it makes no sense because Liston's wife goes to her grave 40 years later never mentioning it. Joe Louis never mentions it, Liston's son never mentions it. And more importantly Liston admitted years later boxing writer Mark Kram that he threw the fight because of death threats to HIM not to his son. Even though I think this part of the book is far fetched speculation this is such a good read I recommend it to anyone who wants to know more about Sonny Liston.

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