

SPOTLIGHT ON SPORT

The Tragedy of Joe Louis

(By Adam Lapin)

THE name Joe Louis doesn't ring any bells with my kids or their generation—except for those who memorise the record books and have read that he was one of the great boxing champions of all time.

But when we relative oldsters hear the name we remember the Brown Bomber of old. We recall the slim, trim, young Louis of 20 years ago who knocked the Nazi Max Schmeling and the myth of white supremacy out of the ring.

We recall that he was one of the pioneers in breaking down jimcrow in sports, and how at an earlier and less advanced stage in the fight for civil rights Louis was regarded by Negroes everywhere as a symbol of their fight for full citizenship.

TURNED WRESTLER

So far there is sadness and even tragedy in the image of the now middle-aged and flabby Louis turning wrestler to make a few bucks.

There is also another tragedy highlighted by the sports writer Milton Gross.

"I saw Joe Louis wrestling

1956—1957

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last night, which was indignity enough, but the greater indignity was that he went through his burlesque before an audience from which Negroes were excluded."

Gross says he told Louis just a few minutes before the match went on that the Gable Arena,



where the wrestling match was staged, was jimcrow.

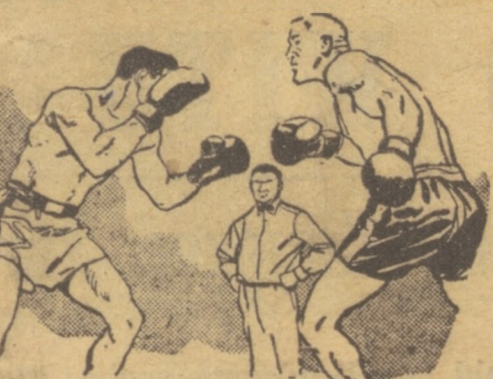
"At least I had to believe that he didn't know earlier," Gross writes. "He said so. He threatened to walk out of the dressing-room and take a plane to Miami immediately without going on. He was argued into staying and wrestling."

Louis explained that he had no chance to find out about the long-time jimcrow policy at the Gable Arena.

TAWDRY IMAGE

Out of his very explanation emerged the tawdry image of the one-time champ crawling through the ropes at one little second-rate stadium after the other, night after night.

After the match was over Louis told Gross, "I don't want that kind of money," and said he



would contribute it to the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People Education Fund. He also said he would never perform again in a jimcrow arena.

More important than the money was the spark of the old Louis in his statements indicating how he felt about jimcrow.

It isn't easy to keep the spark alive while hurrying from one cheap wrestling arena to another, trying to meet bills, trying to raise the dough to pay off the big tax claim by the U.S. Treasury Department.

There's no point being sore at the harassed and weary Louis. He was fleeced by promoters and hangers-on, socked by the Government, forced to keep selling his name and his reputation after the prowess and youth were gone.

Old fighters don't fade away, especially if they are Negroes; they keep on fighting or wrestling and scrounging around to pay the bill collector.

Surely a great athlete like Louis should have been rewarded by a grateful country and permitted to retire or to find himself a new profession.

ROLL OF HONOUR

HERE is a full list of the people's leaders arrested in the various centres.

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PIETERMARITZBURG:

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WORCESTER:

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CAPE TOWN:

L. B. Lee-Warden M.P., Fred Carneson, Annie Silinga, Alex La Guma, Reggie September, Sonia Bunting, I. O. Horvitch, A. Sibeko, Greenwood Ngotyana, George Peake, Joseph Moroleng, John Mtini, Lionel Forman, Benny Turok, D. Mgunyeka.

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Mrs. Josephine Swanepoel wishes to thank the A.N.C. Women's League and the workers of Edworks for the help they rendered during the illness of her late husband and the part they played at the funeral. Her late husband's name was George Swanepoel, who died recently.

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STUTTERHEIM:

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