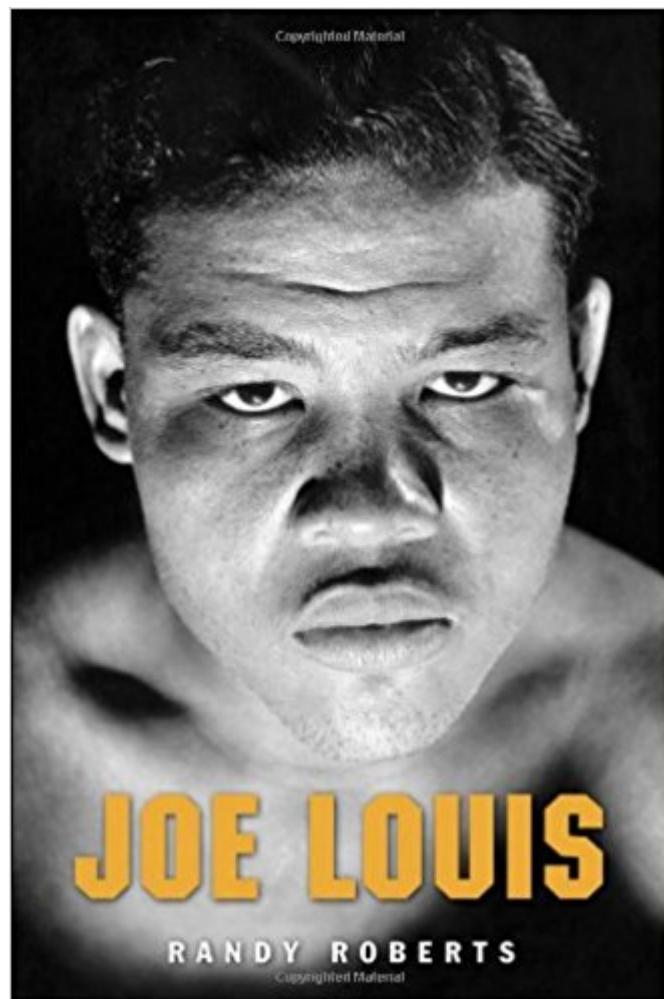


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# Joe Louis: Hard Times Man



## Synopsis

Joe Louis defended his heavyweight boxing title an astonishing twenty-five times and reigned as world champion for more than eleven years. He got more column inches of newspaper coverage in the 1930s than FDR did. His racially and politically charged defeat of Max Schmeling in 1938 made Louis a national hero. But as important as his record is what he meant to African-Americans: at a time when the boxing ring was the only venue where black and white could meet on equal terms, Louis embodied all their hopes for dignity and equality. Through meticulous research and first-hand interviews, acclaimed historian and biographer Randy Roberts presents Louis, and his impact on sport and country, in a way never before accomplished. Roberts reveals an athlete who carefully managed his public image, and whose relationships with both the black and white communities— including his relationships with mobsters— were far more complex than the simplistic accounts of heroism and victimization that have dominated previous biographies. Richly researched and utterly captivating, this extraordinary biography presents the full range of Joe Louis's power in and out of the boxing ring.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The author of superb studies of the boxers Jack Johnson and Jack Dempsey, Mr. Roberts spins a graceful and reliable narrative of Louis's life. [He] also gets into the ring with the question: Why did Joe Louis matter so much to so many?"—Wall Street Journal (Wall Street Journal 2010-10-23)"Roberts is a fine match with his subject. He supports with powerful evidence his

contention that Louis's impact was enormous and profound."•Bill Littlefield, *Boston Globe* (Bill Littlefield *Boston Globe* 2011-01-09)"Well-researched, intelligent, and insightful. . . . [Roberts is] able to capture the drama, brutality, and pathos of Louis's epic battles."•Glenn Altschuler, *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Glenn Altschuler *Philadelphia Inquirer* 2011-12-26)"[This] new biography by Randy Roberts restores Louis to his proper place in the pantheon, both as an athlete and as a cultural icon."•Allen St. John, *Dallas Morning News* (Allen St. John *Dallas Morning News* 2011-01-02) "A sympathetic, moving life of the Brown Bomber by veteran cultural historian and biographer Roberts. . . . All legendary athletes should hope for treatment by such capable, compassionate hands."•Kirkus Reviews, starred review (Kirkus Reviews)"A biography to be savored. . . . Roberts' narrative of the pugilist and the man is gripping. . . . He captures the spirit of the age, when boxing on radio fed the national imagination. . . . Roberts recovers a great story and makes it sing for him."•Andrew Burstein, *Baton Rouge Advocate* (Andrew Burstein *Baton Rouge Advocate*)"It's a thrilling account of an extraordinary life, one that needed to be retold to a generation to whom Joe Louis is no more than an occasional face on ESPN Classic. There was a giant in those days, and Roberts has reclaimed him for us."•Allen Barra, *St. Petersburg Times* (Allen Barra *St. Petersburg Times*)"[An] exciting account of the great champ's life. . . . [The book] isn't so much a biography as a cultural history of its subject's life and times. . . . It's a thrilling account of an extraordinary life, one that needed to be retold to a generation to whom Joe Louis is no more than an occasional face on ESPN Classic. He was a giant in those days, and Randy Roberts has reclaimed him for us."•Allen Barra, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (Allen Barra *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* 2011-06-07)"Louis's story had been told by sportwriters and historians many times, but Roberts is a fine match with his subject. He supports with powerful evidence his contention that Louis's impact was enormous and profound. His explorations of the shameful social conditions and smug hypocrisy poisoning the landscape over which Louis loomed for a time are incisive and convincing."•Bill Littlefield, *New York Post* (Bill Littlefield *New York Post*)"Roberts has written a thoroughly researched, engaging book on African American heavyweight boxer Joe Louis. . . . This excellent book has much to say about race, nationalism, and identity."•A. Ejikeme, *CHOICE* (A. Ejikeme *CHOICE*)"Roberts's book is a thoroughly researched beginner's guide to boxing as well as an introductory course in 20th century politics that contains, at the heart of it, a stoic enigma of a fighter who wasn't afraid to go toe-to-toe with the world."•Lance Hicks, *Bama Escapes* (Lance Hicks *Bama Escapes*)"[In this] concise, judicious biography, . . . Roberts vividly re-creates a bygone time when boxing enjoyed enormous popularity. . . . Roberts is superb at conveying the excitement that surrounded

Louis' exploits."Ã¢â€”Richmond Times-Dispatch (Richmond Times-Dispatch)Selected as a Choice Outstanding Academic Title for 2011 in the Sports and RecreationÃ¢â€” category. (Choice Outstanding Academic Title Choice 2012-03-12)

Randy Roberts is Distinguished Professor of History at Purdue University.Ã¢â€” His previous books include biographies ofÃ¢â€” Jack Dempsey, Jack Johnson, and John WayneÃ¢â€” (all nominated for Pulitzer Prizes); a history of American sports since 1945; and books on Charles Lindbergh, the Mike Tyson trial, and the Vietnam War. He lives in Lafayette, Indiana.

Outstanding book on the Greatest HW Champion of all time. He did not have to keep winning the title back like Ali, he is the only one with 25 defenses. The arrived in great shape, actually better than described.

A very interesting and detailed tale of Joe's life and his significance in racially oppressive America. Randy writes with quite authority and the book seems quite complete... except that he skipped two of the very few things I knew about Joe Louis before buying this book. I had heard a bit about his late meeting with his father. I had also heard that he became firm friends with Max S later in life. I was looking forward to hearing more detail about those two episodes but they did not appear in the book. I am now wondering if there are some holes in it. But it was a good read and a good insight into a period of US history with some quite nasty racism.

This is not only the best biography I've ever read, but it is just a really great book to read. I recommend it if you are interested in U.S. history, especially if you like boxing.

Should be required reading for any professional athlete in contemporary America.

Read this for a class I took taught by the author. Interesting perspective on how the boxing profession affected many aspects of America.

Great read!

The story of one of America's greatest icons by one of our best chroniclers of American sports history. Told in fascinating detail, "Joe Louis: Hard Times Man", recounts the rise and fall of Joe

Louis. Roberts, who is probably the greatest living boxing writer, places the story of Louis in the context of Jim Crow America. Sure to please any boxing fan and any student of 20th Century America.

This book is an fun easy read. Excellent for those sports enthusiast who enjoy sport history especially during one of the most difficult times in America during WWII.

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