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Rocky Marciano vs. Ezzard Charles

Bill Cayton

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Bill Cayton's PRIME TIME BOXING

Presents:

Rocky Marciano vs. Ezzard Charles
June 17, 1954

Let’s go back to 1954, that pivotal year of the hydrogen bomb, the Army-McCarthy hearings, the beginning of the Civil Rights movement, and the birth of rock ‘n’ roll. Rocky Marciano is the heavyweight champion of the world, and the number one contender is the ex-champ, Ezzard Charles.

Rocky Marciano had got into boxing rather late. He was almost 25 when he turned pro under the management of Al Weil. But within two years Rocky had become a bonafide contender. On October 26, 1951, he sent Joe Louis into permanent retirement, knocking the Brown Bomber out in the eighth round at New York’s Madison Square Garden. Less than one year later, Marciano knocked out Jersey Joe Walcott to win the world heavyweight title.

Ezzard Charles had a completely different background. Undefeated as an amateur, he turned professional at age 18 after winning the National AAU middleweight title.

Victories over Teddy Yarosz, Anton Christoforidis, and Charley Burley, made Charles a ranked contender by mid-1942. Ez had grown into a light heavyweight by the time he went into the Army in 1943. Resuming his boxing career in 1946, Charles quickly established himself by far as the best 175-pound fighter in the world, thrice defeating Archie Moore, the final time by knockout.

When world heavyweight champion Joe Louis announced his retirement in 1949, it was Ezzard Charles who faced Joe Walcott for the vacant heavyweight title, winning a unanimous decision. Ezzard Charles successfully defended his heavyweight championship eight times, and defeating Joe Louis when Louis tried a comeback.

Although Charles lost his title to Jersey Joe Walcott in 1951, he was the top contender when he entered the ring against Rocky Marciano, who had beat Jersey Joe Walcott to win the Heavyweight Championship.

Almost 50,000 fans are present at Yankee Stadium on June 17, 1954 to see Rocky Marciano, a 7 to 2 favorite, make his third defense. The referee is Ruby Goldstein. Your radio blow-by-blow man is, of course, the great Don Dunphy. Bill Corum, well known sports columnist of the New York Journal American, is your ringside analyst.

Rocky Marciano’s first title defense against Ezzard Charles was his second bout in Yankee Stadium. The Rock had knocked out Harry Matthews in two rounds to clinch his shot at Jersey Joe Walcott’s world heavyweight title in 1952.

Aside from Joe Louis, Ezzard Charles was probably the best boxer Rocky ever fought.

After the fight, referee Ruby Goldstein said he did not have to say “Break” at any time during the bout,

although he had to pry the men apart twice in the later rounds. Remarkable, especially when one considers how Marciano liked to fight in close. Everyone got his money’s worth from this one!

About PRIME TIME BOXING

Programming that cannot be duplicated or found anywhere else, PRIME TIME BOXING features the legendary Don Dunphy, the all-time most dynamic and knowledgeable boxing commentator describing the most exciting and memorable fights of Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis, Rocky Marciano, Sugar Ray Robinson and all the other great champions.

Through the incredible magic of the original radio broadcasts listeners will be able to "see" the fights for the first time - in the theater of their mind! A magical replay of exciting sports history presented on audio CD, PRIME TIME BOXING includes the greatest fights ever, including many that have never been filmed or broadcast on TV.

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