

A Classic Photo

boxing

by don cogswell

Feb 25 1964 I was 14 years old, long enough ago I could listen to the fight on the radio, and heard for the first time that Clay "continues to backpeddle" and that Liston "had a mouse" under his eye. Parts of boxing's lexicon new to my little

guy's ears. Clay, soon to be the world champ, drew my attention to the sweet science, despite pulling for his opponents for the first half of his multiple reigns.

This classic shot, featured in Life magazine's coverage of the bout—yep, those were the days for media attention—shows Sonny at about the end of his road. Busted open under the left eye, a prominent "mouse" under the right, the annihilator of Patterson looks to be approaching his sixtiest birthday.

Liston is wearing classic 1950s white trunks with a black stripe. Clay is dressed nearly the same. The black-to-almost-purple gloves are barely taped, and the thumbs are definitely unattached.

Fittingly, the lunar-like ring light over Liston's head is out, the one over Clay has the burnished highlights of a crown.

Of course, Sonny quit on his stool after six, an official TKO7, Clay.

(This picture, taken by the estimable Herb Scharfman, are part of Life's pictorial coverage of the bout that included, along with Scharfman's work, a suite of brilliant photos by the brilliant Ralph Morse.)

