

# Archie Moore: From Australia to San Diego

By Mike Casey on September 27, 2012



*“May I point out,” Archie Moore pointed out, “that chewing without swallowing is not easy?”*

**Moore, a coming middleweight at the time, was concerned about his weight as he approached an important fight with Ron Richards at the Sydney Stadium...**

*When the young globetrotting Archie Moore went “down under” to meet the Aborigines of Australia in 1940, it was definitely a case of “G’day mate, let’s get slim.”*

*Moore, a coming middleweight at the time, was concerned about his weight as he approached an important fight with Ron Richards at the Sydney Stadium. Richards was something of a national hero in Australia, a three-weight champion (middleweight, light heavyweight and heavyweight) with an impressive 85-19-7 record.*

*People would constantly wonder in the years ahead how Archie could lose weight so quickly before a fight without seeming to lose his strength and endurance. He learned the secret whilst staying at a ranch in the Megalong Valley, about 70 miles outside Sydney.*

*There he made his first contact with the Aboriginal people and he was at once impressed at how they lived in perfect harmony with their gods and nature. He was also intrigued by his discovery that there appeared to be no such thing as a fat Aborigine.*

*Moore explained: “I heard stories of how they were capable of crossing hundreds of miles in the desolate Australian bush country with only a pouch of dried meat. It dawned on me they must derive their staying power from their diet or living habits, and probably both.*

*“On those fantastic long treks through the wilderness, they got by on the strength they received by chewing the dried meat. The essence of the meat was the secret. They swallowed no bulk but chewed and chewed on a piece of jerked beef until every last drop of juice was extracted, and then chewed some more. As for water, they were known to go days without it.*

*"If they got by on the juices of what they ate, so could I. If it was possible for me to keep my strength just with the liquid that entered my body from chewing my food, why did I have to swallow the bulk? I tried it. I chewed each piece of medium rare steak until there was not a drop of moisture left and then discarded what was left. After a week I found I was as strong as ever and had lost two pounds. Two pounds of too, too solid flesh."*

*One has to admire Moore's commitment. To discard the actual meat of a piece of meat is almost a criminal act to all but vegetarians. But the future champion of the world admitted that he found his new regimen tough. "May I point out that chewing without swallowing is not easy? It is agony and it will nearly drive you crazy not to swallow a succulent cut of meat. And at first I was a constant back-slider, gulping down an occasional morsel, but my will to lose weight was stronger than my taste buds, and now I can use this method with no qualms."*

*In the early going of his fight against Ron Richards, Archie must have wondered if his magic diet had turned him into Clark Kent instead of Superman. Moore was quickly decked by a counterpunch and took a count of nine. When he arose, that clever brain that would make him a legend began to go to work, no doubt boosted by the pure meat juice with which he had filled his tank.*

*"I shifted from my usual shell defense to a crab defense. Face covered, one eye peeping under a thumb, and forearms and elbows taking all the punches. Slowly I came out of it and began to box him very carefully, highly defensively.*

*"I kept moving, moving, never letting him get set and never keeping myself stationary either. In the third round I managed to nuisance jab him so much I got his nose bleeding. In the fourth I moved up with my jabs and cut him over both eyes. The fifth and sixth rounds found me worrying these wounds, and in the seventh he made a tremendous rally, but I was able to hold him in check. During the eighth I managed to open up a few more cuts on his lips and ear and he looked a mess. In the tenth round they stopped the fight."*

*The following morning, Archie awoke to find that the sports headlines were all about him. "Richards was a triple crown holder, so beating him in those days was like beating Joe Louis in the States. I had become a name fighter."*

### **Eddie Booker**

*Archie won another five fights in Australia, including a second victory over Ron Richards, before returning home to San Diego with a glowing reputation as a man to be watched in the middleweight division. Moore enhanced his status when he fought a 10-round draw with the ranking Eddie Booker at the San Diego Coliseum in February, 1941.*

*The ill-fated Booker, known as "Black Dynamite," was a revelation in his own right, a beautiful boxer whose career was sadly cut short by deteriorating eyesight. Eddie lost just eight of his 79 fights. Hank Kaplan, one of the great trainers and historians, rated Booker as the tenth greatest middleweight of all.*

*Moore was moving up fast and was set to fight the cream of a crowded and multi-talented division. What happened next, however, could have quite easily killed him. Raking leaves and enjoying the sunshine one pleasant afternoon, Archie was suddenly crippled by pain.*

*Recalled Moore: "It was as if a knife had been thrown swiftly into my stomach. I doubled over in pain. Sharp, agonizing darts of pain in my abdomen. The next thing I remember was being driven to the hospital.*

*"A young doctor, John Pollack, was assigned to me, and I was suffering such intense pain he had to force me to lie flat. Dr. Pollack said I had a perforated ulcer and would have to have an immediate operation. With all the pain, I almost flipped lying there, for I felt that abdominal surgery would be the end of Archie Moore, fighter.*

*"Back in some corner of my mind a memory fought to get out. I recalled meeting a fighter who had resumed boxing after an operation for appendicitis. And he told me he had asked the doctor to make the incision a certain way - to cut along the muscles and separate them rather than cut through.*

*"I pleaded with my doctor almost incoherently to make a similar incision, but he did understand and he did perform the operation just that way. Many people seated at ringside have noticed the scar shaped like a hockey stick on my stomach, and it is the result of Dr. Pollack making the incision down the solar plexus and then sideways."*

## **Painful**

*Those painful days must have seemed endless for Archie. His boxing career had been going so well. He wanted to fight again. He wanted to get back on track. "I was in the hospital for 38 days. I weighed 163 lbs. when I entered the hospital and was discharged weighing 108. I found out I had survived peritonitis. At that time it was fatal in a great number of cases, since drugs like penicillin were not in common use, if at all.*

*"I think I beat peritonitis by having a body that was extremely fit. Following peritonitis I developed pneumonia, a common side effect."*

*If Moore thought his problems were over, he couldn't have been more mistaken. The gods were far from finished playing their cruel game. His failure to put on significant weight was the next big worry.*

*"My weight went up slowly from 108 to 120, but I couldn't seem to gain any more than that. Slowly, ounce by ounce, I gained another 15 lbs., but then my weight stayed exactly at 135. It was most puzzling. I was eating and resting but not gaining weight."*

*It wasn't long before Archie got the answer to the puzzle. Returning from the beach one day, he was once again doubled over by abdominal pain. This time his assailant was acute appendicitis. As we like to say these days, you couldn't make it up.*

*"I was admitted to the hospital without delay. I was told I had to be operated on immediately and I was assured this operation was not as complicated as the previous one and I would be up and walking around in a matter of days. I was dubious, but they were right. Very shortly after that I gained weight rapidly and in no time at all I was up to 155."*

*Archie Moore the fighter was finally ready to fight again. With the grim and unswerving determination he had shown in the hospital, Moore hacked away for the next eleven years in arguably the most competitive era of all before knocking down the door and taking the light heavyweight championship from Joey Maxim.*

*Countless fights. Multiple eliminators. Kicked around, delayed and held in check by the powers that be. But Archie did it and then gave everyone his own polite version of the one finger salute by reigning for over a decade.*

*Must have been something he ate.*

*(Mike Casey is the Founder & Editor of ALL TIME BOXING at <https://sites.google.com/site/alltimeboxingrankings>. He is a freelance journalist and boxing historian and a member of the International Boxing Research Organization (IBRO).)*

**Courtesy of Boxing.Com**