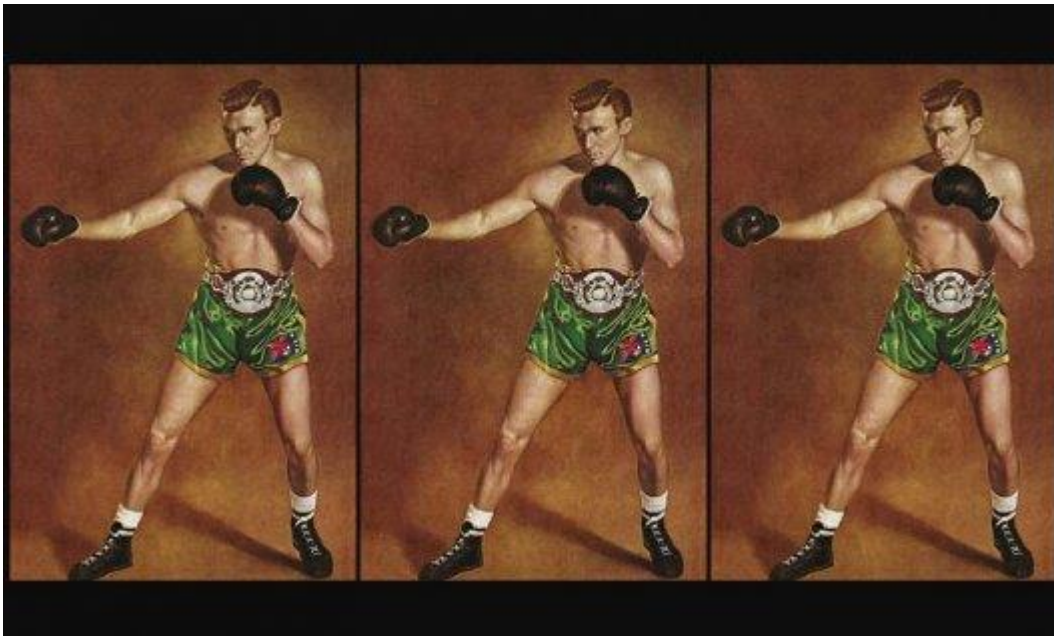


## The Title Cometh by Daniel Attias



*He will forever be remembered in Australian boxing history as a pioneer of the sport.*

An Australian bantamweight by the name of Jimmy Carruthers shocked the world back in 1952 at the tender age of 24...

Australian boxing was crying out for recognition by the middle part of the 20th century. There had been a plethora of greats who had graced the prize ring but not a single one had been universally recognized as the best the world had to offer.

Les Darcy won a version of the world middleweight title back in 1915; Young Griffo was considered one of the greatest featherweights the world has seen but like Darcy his claim to be the world's best was always disputed; Jack Carroll was the number one contender to Barney Ross' welterweight title back in the 1930s but he never got the chance to fight for it; and the great heavyweight Peter Jackson, who learnt his trade in Australia, despite being born in the West Indies, was never to gain his shot at glory, as many others his color did not.

The story was always "close but no cigar" for Australia's pugilistic greats, that is, until a young bantamweight by the name of Jimmy Carruthers shocked the world back in 1952.

Jimmy Carruthers was born in Paddington, a suburb of Sydney on July 5, 1929. His boxing career began at a young age. He won the amateur Australian bantamweight title in 1947 and was a member of the 1948 Olympic team.

His Olympic campaign began well with two wins in two fights but his Olympic dream would wind up, disappointingly, when he suffered a large cut to his eyebrow and he was forced to withdraw from his fight against eventual gold medallist Tibor Csik. In an ironic turn of events, Csik was forced to flee his homeland of Hungary after participating in the

Hungarian revolution in 1956 and immigrated to Sydney, Australia, the home of Carruthers.

Carruthers turned professional in 1950 and his rise to the top was swift. He racked up eight straight wins before facing Elley Bennett for the Australian bantamweight title on the 14th May, 1951 in his ninth professional fight.

Bennett was considered a tough ask for the inexperienced Carruthers. He was a 37 fight veteran and was ranked fifth in *Ring Magazine's* annual ratings in February of 1951 in the bantamweight division.

The fight was a shutout win for Carruthers; he took every single round according to *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

*Decisively outpointing Elley Bennett, 21-year-old Jimmy Carruthers last night won the Australian bantamweight championship in his ninth professional contest.*

*He did not lose one of the 15 rounds against Bennett, who is rated fifth in the list of contenders for Vic Toweel's world title.*

*The Canberra Times* report on the fight was also full of praise for the young man and despite giving Bennett the ninth round in the contest, there was no doubt as to who was the better man.

*Southpaw Jimmy Carruthers brilliantly outpointed Elley Bennett to win the Australian Bantamweight Championship at Sydney Stadium tonight. Carruthers gave a classic boxing display, and completely out- classed Bennett.*

*He lost only one round the ninth.*

*A near capacity house of 14,000 went wild with excitement when the referee, Bill Henneberry, crowned Carruthers.*

*They stood cheering, whistling, and stamping their feet while Carruthers' second and manager, Bill McConnell embraced him in the middle of the ring.*

The report went on to describe Carruthers' spectacular rise through the ranks and his ability to outpunch his opponent at a rate of ten to one, this ability to thoroughly outpunch his opponent would be the catalyst for his world title win some 18 months later.

*Since turning professional nine months ago, Carruthers has had a meteoric rise.*

*Carruthers fought to a plan of keeping away from Bennett and sniping with his right while on the back move.*

*He carried this plan out perfectly, and often steadied the champion with a solid left to the jaw.*

*In many rounds Carruthers landed punches at the ratio of ten to one.*

The win over Bennett solidified his place amongst the world's elite at 118 pounds and the talk of a shot at Vic Toweel's world title intensified.

Carruthers would fight five more fights over the next 18 months, winning all five before gaining his shot at Toweel and his Commonwealth and world titles on the 15th of November 1952.

Vic Toweel had won the bantamweight title in 1950 from Manuel Ortiz and like Carruthers, Toweel was very inexperienced when he first fought for the title, with just 16 professional bouts to his name. After beating Ortiz he would go on to win 13 straight fights including three title defenses before he faced Carruthers.

The bout was over before it began. Carruthers jumped on Vic right from the opening seconds of the bout and landed what can only be described as a vicious torrent of leather.

*The Canberra Times* described the ease with which Carruthers won the bout.

*Jimmy Carruthers last night won the world bantamweight championship by sensationally knocking out the South African holder Vic Toweel in the first round.*

*Carruthers thus became the first Australian in history to win a world boxing title.*

*The fight, which took place at the Rand Stadium, Johannesburg, lasted only two minutes 19 seconds.*

*The crowd of 28,000 was stunned at the dramatic suddenness of Carruthers' victory.*

*Toweel did not land a single punch on the Australian.*

Australia finally had its recognition on the world stage.

Carruthers would go on to beat Toweel in a rematch in South Africa on the March 21, 1953. He won the bout in the 10th round via knockout and displayed his class by instantly rushing to the aid of the fallen Toweel once he had been counted out.

The way in which Jimmy Carruthers wore down Vic Toweel in the rematch left little doubt as to who was the better man.

The sky was the limit for this young man, who at just 23 years of age was the holder of a prestigious world title, the first for any Australian boxer.

He would bring his title back to Sydney and defend the bantamweight crown against American Henry "Pappy" Gault, winning in impressive fashion. The vanquished Gault was full of praise for Carruthers after the bout, as noted in the November 14th *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

*Pappy Gault lavished unstinted praise on Carruthers as he sat in the dressing room nursing a tender right hand after the fight.*

*Gault said: "It was a pleasure to lose to such a great and gallant champion – if how I feel could be called pleasure."*

*Carruthers is a true champion – none better in fact and he should hold the title for a long time to come.*

Whether or not Carruthers would hold the title for a 'long time to come' is mere conjecture as he would retire at his peak after just two more fights, one against fellow Australian Bobby Sinn in a non-title bout and one more in a title defense against Chamroen Songkitrat in Thailand. The fight was the only title bout of the gloved era to be fought bare-footed, due to the inclement weather.

Jimmy Carruthers retired from the ring after his victory against Songkitrat in 1954, at the tender age of 24 with an unblemished record of 19-0.

He would return some seven years later in the lightweight and featherweight divisions and fought six more bouts but his inactivity proved to be too much, he was a mere shadow of his former self, losing four of the six comeback fights before finally calling it quits.

Jimmy Carruthers resume may not stack up with many of Australia's pugilistic greats but he brought great pride and joy to a country who had been screaming out for international recognition when he thoroughly dismantled Vic Toweel to win the countries first universally recognised world title.

He will forever be remembered in Australian boxing history as a pioneer of the sport. There can be only one first and for Australian boxing world champions that first is Jimmy Carruthers.