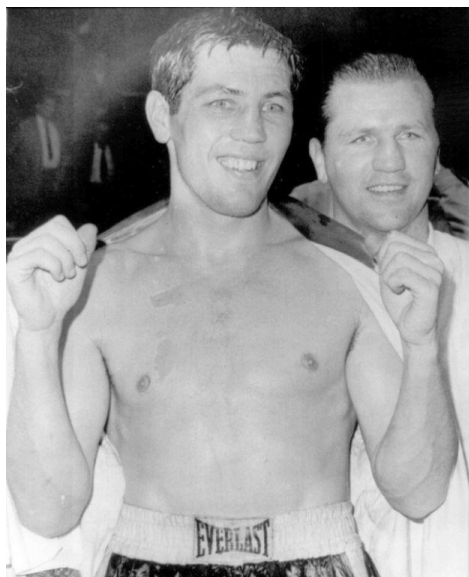


Boxing Ringside With Bobby Franklin

Joey Archer He Always Had A Boxer's Chance



Joey Archer with Brother Jimmy

It has often been said when a fighter appeared to be overmatched but was a solid puncher, he had a puncher's chance at winning. This meant that even though the odds were against him on paper, he could pull out an upset victory by virtue of landing the big shot, also known as a lucky punch.

Max Baer was a decided underdog against Joe Louis, yet he was given a puncher's chance. The same was said about Earnie Shavers when he went up against Muhammad Ali. Shavers certainly came close but couldn't pull it off.

Ruben Carter was a monstrous puncher, so he always had a shot of scoring a major upset in a big fight as he did against Emile Griffith when he stopped him in the first round of their bout.

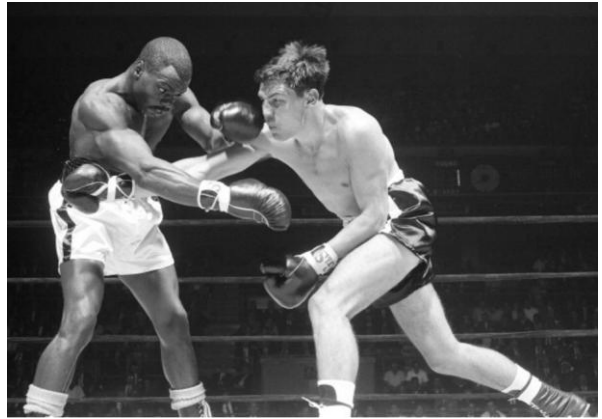
But what about the boxer's chance. The times when a contestant not known for his power is able to upset a terrific puncher. This happened to Hurricane Carter when Joey Archer beat him.

Archer also beat another very hard puncher when he decisioned future middleweight champion Dick Tiger. Both the Carter and Tiger fights were very close split decision victories for Archer. However, many felt both of his opponents were just too strong and powerful for him and would walk through the slick boxing Archer.

Joey Archer, at 5'10", was tall for a middleweight. He looked frail, and out of his 45 victories in 49 fights, he only scored eight knockouts. He was never stopped. Despite that, he beat much solid opposition and earned two cracks at the middleweight championship, both times against Emile Griffith. Both fights were very close decision losses by Archer. Many at ringside thought he had done more than enough to win the title in the first match.

Joey Archer, who was from the Bronx, NY, made his pro debut in 1956 with a 4 round decision over Danny Jones at Sunnyside Gardens. He compiled 30 straight wins before dropping a decision to Jose Gonzalez in 1962. In the fight, both men were cut, and Joey lost by unanimous decision. Two months later, Archer handily won a rematch with Gonzalez.

Joey would continue piling up wins on the road to his title shot against Griffith. He beat solid competitors in Mick Leahy, Denny Moyer, Blair Richardson, Holly Mims, Ruben Carter, Dick Tiger, Don Fullmer, Willie James, and Sugar Ray Robinson (This was Robinson's final bout). The Associated Press reported that Archer landed close to 200 left jabs on his opponent in the Richardson bout.



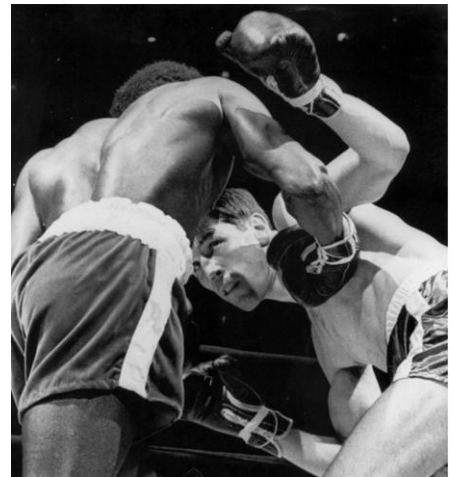
Joey Archer versus Ruben Carter

Joey was cruising towards a shot at the title and was just about to sign to fight Emile Griffith when he accepted a return fight with Don Fullmer. The fight was scheduled to take place in Boston on December 13, 1965. The 12 round bout was for something called the WBA American Middleweight Title, which Fullmer held.

In those days, Boston officials had a reputation for rendering some very odd decisions, and this bout was no exception. At the end of 12 rounds, it appeared Archer had easily outpointed Fullmer, but not in the strange eyesight of the two judges who scored the fight for Don. Instead, referee James McCarron favored Joey.

The stench from the decision was so bad that it did not prevent Archer from getting his shot at Emile Griffith. The two signed to meet at Madison Square Garden on July 13, 1966.

A crowd of 13,776 turned out on a very hot night, and they were not disappointed. The fight was an exciting 15 round affair. Archer boxed beautifully while Emile kept the pressure on and fought well inside. Joey was in constant motion and proved a very difficult target. Emile was the stronger man in close. It was a difficult fight to score, and at the end of fifteen rounds, the scorecards were close but in Emile's favor. Judges Art Aidala and Al Berl had Griffith winning 9-5 and 8-7, respectively, while referee Johny LoBianco saw it as a draw. The press was mixed in its opinions, with UPI scoring it 8-6-1 for Archer and the AP having it 9-5-1 for the champion. In his dressing room after the fight, Joey said, "I thought, I really thought, I had it 9-6 easy,"



Joey Archer and Emile Griffith trade punches in their first fight

It was both a good enough and close enough fight that the two were signed to fight again in six months. The rematch did not disappoint, and the ending was again controversial. Archer

started out strong and was leading in the early rounds, but Emile came on during the second half of the fight.

Archer did not have the same fire as in the first bout yet still put up a great effort while again coming up short on the scorecards, this time by unanimous decision. 8-6, 8-6, and 8-7. Again, the press was split on the outcome, with two reporters from the AP choosing different winners. One had it 8-6-1 for Archer, while another had it 7-6-2 for Griffith.

Joey was very bitter at this loss. He refused to shake hands with Griffith, which upset Emile, who told Don Dunphy, "That was not Joey." In fact, Joey was so disgusted after losing three controversial decisions in a row that he walked away from boxing. He never fought again, and I'm not sure he ever attended another boxing card. He really disappeared from the fight scene.



Griffith lands a right on Archer in their Second Fight

He and his brother Jimmy ran a couple of bars in New York. The second bar they operated, Joey Archer's Pub, was conspicuous by its absence of boxing photos on the wall. Instead, it became known for its poetry nights. Archer really appeared to have been fed up with boxing.

While neither Griffith fight could be termed highway robbery, In Joey's mind he had worked hard and deserved to win. He had fought the best over many years, and many of those fights had been close decision wins for him. However, in the two biggest fights of his life, he was unable to sway the judge's opinion. This left him angry and finished with boxing not only as a fighter but in having any involvement with the sport.

I'm not sure if Joey Archer could be termed a recluse, but I have not been able to find any interviews he has given in all the years since his retirement. No current photos seem to exist. He really did fade from sight.

During his career, Archer was beautiful to watch in the ring. He used his left jab like an artist using a brush to paint a portrait. He was quick on his feet and a master at feinting. Had he won the title and kept fighting, he certainly would never have been forgotten. I hope he found peace with himself and has had a good life. He had a career he should be very proud of.