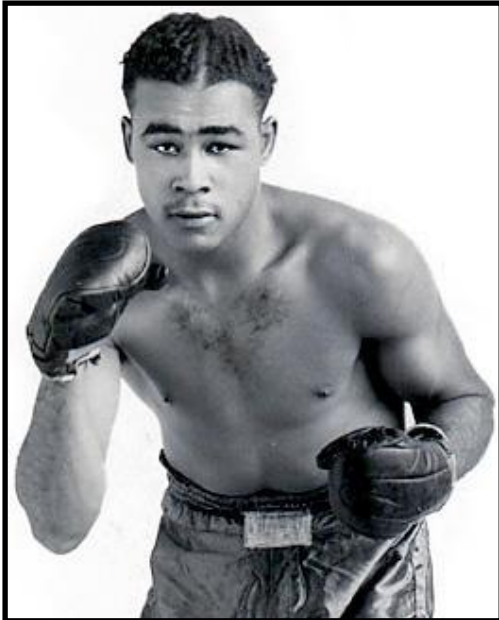


Boxing Ringside with Bobby Franklin

Extended Footage Of Charlie Burley Fighting

Oakland Billy Smith Emerges



Charley Burley has been known as the greatest fighter to have never fought for a championship. Some say he was the greatest pound for pound fighter of all time. Judging from his opposition, he certainly was someone that has to be taken seriously when rating the greats of the past.

Burley would fight anyone in any weight class. The problem was, there were many, mainly the champions, who wouldn't fight him. Despite ranking in the top ten for years he never got a shot at a championship. There are many reasons cited for this. The top one is he was just too good. But if that were the case for excluding a

fighter from a title shot, most of the great champions never would have been granted a chance at fighting for a title.

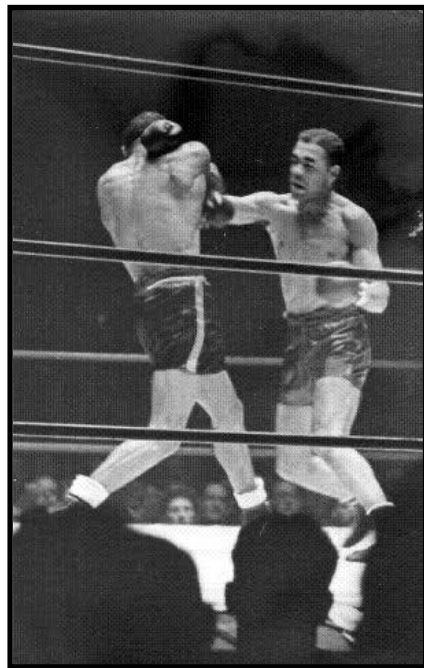
It gets more complicated with Burley. Yes, he was good. He was a brilliant defensive fighter who also possessed a lethal punch. In addition, he was an excellent counter puncher. As a result, it was impossible to catch him with a clean punch. One drawback; unless you were well schooled in the intricacies of the mechanics of boxing, he could appear a bit boring.

The fact is, there was little to gain from beating Burley and everything to lose. Nobody was going to look good against him. Promoters also felt he would not be a big draw if he held the title. That is too bad because to a boxing purist he was beautiful to watch. He was a true artist in the ring who did everything right.



In a career encompassing 98 fights, Charley was never stopped. In fact, he only lost 12 fights. Archie Moore called him the greatest fighter he ever fought. Burley won a one-sided decision over Moore in 1944, dropping Archie four times over the ten rounds.

For years the only film footage of Burley in action was a short snippet from a fight he had against Oakland Billy Smith. Recently, a longer version, sixteen minutes, of the fight has appeared on Youtube. The two fought twice and this is from their second go around on April 24, 1946 at the Oakland Auditorium in Oakland, California.



It is the first real look at Burley and it is quite revealing. Burley was amazing to watch. Though outweighed by 17 pounds, Charley handles the very capable Smith with ease. His counterpunching is absolutely brilliant. He rolls and slips punches with ease. You can see as the fight wears on that Smith becomes hesitant to lead with punches because when he does Burley slips and counters.

In a 1983 interview with historian Mike Silver, Archie Moore described what it was like to fight Charley Burley. (The entire interview is in Silver's book *The Night The Referee Hit Back*)

Archie Moore: "Charley Burley had a very deceptive style of fighting. He just tricked me. He tricked me because we both boxed similar, but whereas mine was an apparent forward movement Burley's was a continuous serpentine movement. He was like a threshing machine going back and forth. His body would sometimes lean over towards you and he'd pull it back just in time. Hitting him solid was almost impossible. But what made him so dangerous was that he could punch from any angle. He was never off balance although he appeared to be off balance on many occasions. Charley Burley was a terrific puncher, although to look at him you would not know it. His build fooled everybody. Burley's legs were skinny, he was

not extra wide of shoulder, he was small in weight, and his height was the same as mine. But that man could get more leverage into a punch than anyone I ever fought."

There are a number of fighters that have been called great but of whom very little or no film exists. For example, there are no movies available of Harry Greb. In these cases the fighters have to be judged on their records and newspaper and eyewitness accounts. That has been enough for most historians, but in this visual age people want to see the fighters in action.

While it would be nice to see more of Charley Burley in the ring, this clip definitely supports all of the hype surrounding him. In these sixteen minutes you get to see a great fighter in action. His record, the eyewitness accounts, and now extended film footage put together leave no doubt that Burley deserves the accolades he has received.

It is a shame he never got to fight for the championship. Boxing history may have been quite different had he fought a Sugar Ray Robinson. Take the time to watch this film of Burley vs Smith on Youtube. Watch closely and you will see a great ring artist in action. A defensive wizard who packed a punch.

One thing that always impressed me about Burley was the fact that in looking at photos taken of him after his career was over, you would never guess he had been a professional fighter. You would in no way believe a guy without a mark on his face had been in the ring with Archie Moore, Ezzard Charles, Holman Williams, Fritzie Zivic, George Abrams, Aaron Wade, Lloyd Marshall, Jimmy Bivins, and many others. Based on this alone, you know the guy could fight. Now you can see him in action on Youtube.

