

PHILLY MIDDLEWEIGHT IKE WHITE PASSES AT 87

Obituary by John DiSanto – PhillyBoxingHistory.com

Ike White was a tough middleweight journeyman who fought professionally between 1950 and 1969, waging war with a number of rising boxers during his long and bumpy boxing career. He was also the brother-in-law of light heavyweight champion Harold Johnson. This was a label that often overshadowed anything White ever achieved in the boxing ring. He was a regular sparring partner of Johnson's and also trained side-by-side with Charley Scott and Garnet "Sugar" Hart at Champ's Gym in North Philly. During his boxing career, White worked full time as a dock worker, and fought 63 times over a nineteen year span. Ike White died Saturday, March 19, 2022. He was 87.

The Philadelphia native was born Isaac White on January 19, 1935, and apparently became a professional fighter on March 2, 1950, just two months after his fifteenth birthday. Using the name Ike "Whitner", White's debut came clandestinely at the Met in North Philly. He won by four-round decision over Philadelphian Buzzy Sacidor, but didn't have another pro bout for two years, presumably after he had reached an acceptable age for a professional fighter.

White's career was rocky from the beginning. After winning his debut, he lost or drew in his next four starts. White won for the second time in his sixth bout by scoring another four-round points victory, this time over Jesse Keeler.

White continued to struggle for wins as his career progressed. He lost his first fight with Boland Abrams in 1952 by six-round decision, but won the rematch eight months later in a main event bout at South Philly's Toppi Stadium. This was probably the best win of White's career. Between these fights, White lost four fights and drew once. His opponents in this stretch included Tommy Marciano (D6), Richie DeCerio (L6, L6), and Jimmy Arthur (L6).

White became a hurdle for rising local boxers, and Ike tested many of them. He faced Jimmy Carlini, George Justine, Jimmy Beecham, Fred Terry, Chicken Ruben,



Gene Johns, and Carmen Bartolomeo during the first four years of his career. He ended 1954 with a record of 6-16-3, with 1 KO.

He began 1955 with a TKO of unbeaten Joe DeLuca (8-0-3), but dropped his next two to finish out the year. After losing a fight to Larry Barrett (L4) in 1956, White was diagnosed with a spot on his lung, which kept him out of action for about three years.

He returned to the ring in 1959 and fought another ten years in more or less the same pattern as before the layoff. He lost a four-round decision to Al Styles at the Cambria in his comeback fight, then lost two fights against Dick Young (L6, TKO6), with a win over Al Raymond (TKO2) in between them. Next, Stanley "Kitten" Hayward beat him twice (L6, L8) at Convention Hall and the Alhambra. However, Hayward was a red-hot prospect and White's performances in both bouts were impressive, despite the result.

White defeated Trenton's Mel Collins by decision in his second-ever eight-rounder and won his next two fights against Greatest Crawford (W6) and Haywood Johnson (W8). The Crawford fight came at New York's Madison Square Garden. This three-fight win streak turned out to be the longest of his career. In 1961, White graduated to ten-rounders. During the year, he went 1-4, beating Willie Davis (W4) and losing to Holly Mims (L10), future champ Jose Torres (TKO3), Allen Thomas (TKO9), and Joey Giambra (L10).

White repeated a win over Willie Davis (W8) on April 24, 1961 in fight on the undercard of Harold Johnson's title defense over Von Clay at the Arena in Philadelphia. White, married to Johnson's sister Charlotte, was the light heavyweight champion's brother-in-law.

White followed this win with a six-round draw against Eddie Thompson at Madison Square Garden and scored consecutive wins over Al Hauser (W8) and Billy Lynch (W10). Lucius Benson halted this mini-streak with a six-round decision, but White rebounded with a nice six-round decision over dangerous Johnny Alford. This bout came on the undercard of the Philly classic between George Benton and Joey Giardello at Convention Hall. Around this time, there was some talk of White fighting Sugar Ray Robinson at the Blue Horizon. Promoter Marty Kramer tried to put the fight together, but the match never materialized.

After traveling to Scotland and losing to John McCormack (L10), White lost a rematch with Holly Mims (L10), a pair to Luis Gutierrez (TKO7, L6), and Don Turner (L6). White won consecutive fights against Joe DeNucci (W10) and Mike

Pusateri (W10), but these were the final victories of his campaign. Ike lost his final six bouts, including two to Holly Mims (L10, L8), Fred Hernandez (L10), Wilbert McClure (L10), and Bennie Briscoe (TKO3). White's final fight occurred on May 2, 1969 against Bob Benoit. He dropped the ten-round decision to close his career.

Overall, White posted a professional record of 19-40-4, with 4 knockouts. Although he lost far more bouts than he ever won, and was stopped seven times, White was a solid fighter who faced numerous outstanding boxers of his era. Today, losses totaling the number that White collected are not tolerated well by modern fight fans. However, in White's heyday, such a record was a badge of honor. Given the level of his opposition, those losses were proof that he was a true professional in a competitive era of middleweights.

"He's not the type of guy to ask his manager, 'Do you think I can beat this guy?' He'll take on anybody we match with him," White's trainer, Clarence "Skinny" Davidson, once said about Ike. Philadelphia Daily News writer Jack McKinney wrote, "He's a journeyman fighter, but he's the crowd-pleasing type, a stand-up two fisted swinger who puts on a good show." White certainly was that, and he fought wherever he could, inside Philly and elsewhere.

In his hometown, White appeared at sites like the Arena, Convention Hall, the Blue Horizon, Toppi Stadium, the Cambria, the Met, the Plaza, and the Alhambra, all of them legendary Philly fight venues. Outside the city of Philadelphia, he competed at Madison Square Garden, the Las Vegas Convention Center, the Boston Arena, the Baltimore Coliseum, Brooklyn's Eastern Parkway Arena, Convention Hall in Atlantic City, and Newark, NJ's Laurel Gardens.

White entered the PA Boxing Hall of Fame in 2000, and will always be remembered as a tough, true professional boxer who fought them all during his 63-fight campaign.