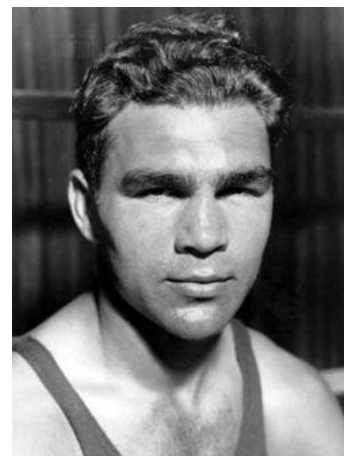


Boxing Ringside with Bobby Franklin

Max Schmeling Vs Young Stribling

Max Schmeling is best remembered for his two fights with Joe Louis. Both were spectacular bouts. In their first encounter, which took place in 1936, Schmeling, considered past his prime, shocked the world when he kayoed Louis in the 12th round of a scheduled 15-round match. Max fought brilliantly that night, taking advantage of a flaw he saw in Joe's defense.



The two fought again, this time for the world heavyweight championship in 1938. In an event with repercussions beyond boxing, Louis destroyed Schmeling in the first round.

It was in 1930 that Max won the heavyweight crown. The German had arrived in the United States two years earlier and had become popular with the fans on this side of the ocean. His physical resemblance to Jack Dempsey was played up, and he was frequently seen in public with the Manassa Mauler.

After his arrival, Max ran off five straight wins from 1928 through 1929, including a decision over Paolino Uzcudun and a knockout victory of Johnny Risko. The Risko bout was named Fight of the Year by *Ring Magazine*.

It was at this time heavyweight champ Gene Tunney decided to retire from the ring. Schmeling and Jack Sharkey were picked to fight for the vacant title. Schmeling's victories had earned him a shot, and Jack Sharkey's recent decision win over Young Stripling put him into the other corner.

In the 4th round, Sharkey hit Schmeling with a low blow. Max sank to the canvas while his manager jumped into the ring yelling foul. The fight was awarded to the German. This was the only time in boxing history that a boxer won the heavyweight championship while on the canvas.



There were cries for a rematch, but Max had other ideas. He wanted to defend the title against another challenger first. No, he wasn't looking for a soft touch, and this was proven when he agreed to take on Young Stribling. (*Pic: Stribling and Schmeling*)

Since his loss to Sharkey in 1929, Stribling had fought 26 times, losing only twice, with both losses by disqualification. At the time of the Schmeling match, Stribling had a total of 267 fights with only 13 losses and 17 draws. 121 of those wins came via knockout. In that time, he had never been stopped, a remarkable feat.

The Schmeling/Stribling bout was scheduled for July 3, 1931 at Municipal Stadium, Cleveland, Ohio. A crowd of 35,000 attended, contributing a gate of \$349,000. What they witnessed was a great contest between two boxer/punchers.

The fight was exciting and interesting. In the early rounds, it was close, but as it wore on, Max started pulling ahead. The champion was the aggressor and would work his way in behind a left jab, setting up his powerful right hand. Stribling also employed a sharp left hand, and the two exchanged left jabs on numerous occasions. *(Pic: Stribling and Schmeling)*

It is interesting to watch just how much Schmeling used his left hand in the fight. He became known for his lethal right hand, which certainly was one of the best ever seen, but Max was no one-handed fighter. In fact, he was a brilliant scientific boxer who calculated his every move using both hands.

In the fifteenth round, with the champion on his way to winning the decision and with just seconds remaining in the fight, Max landed a vicious right that put Stribling down for the count. Somehow, the challenger was able to drag himself to his feet but could hardly stand up. The referee wisely called a halt to the fight.

The Stribling/Schmeling fight is an overlooked bout in Max's career. It is a terrific fight to watch as you get to see two fighters with dynamite in their fists box smartly, employing ring savvy in trying to outfox one another.

Schmeling demonstrated that being a great puncher consists not only in having power, but in developing a delivery system for that force. Max did not waste motion or energy by just throwing lots of bombs, hoping for the best. He sized his opponent up, measured him, played physical chess, and then took advantage of the opportunity when it arose.

In a career that consisted of 253 fights, Stribling was only stopped once, and Max Schmeling was the man who did it. This was no fluke either. The punch that ended the fight was not a lucky shot. It was a perfectly executed right hand that did the job.

Max Schmeling is rarely, if ever, mentioned in a discussion of the greatest heavyweight champions of all time, but he should be. Nat Fleischer, the publisher of *Ring Magazine*, ranked him 7th out of 10 in his best-of-all-time list in 1971.

Max would have been a handful for any of the champs in history, particularly those with a vulnerability to a right hand. He was deceptively fast and a superb ring mechanic. It is time for Max Schmeling to be reevaluated. A good place to start is with his fight against Young Stribling.

