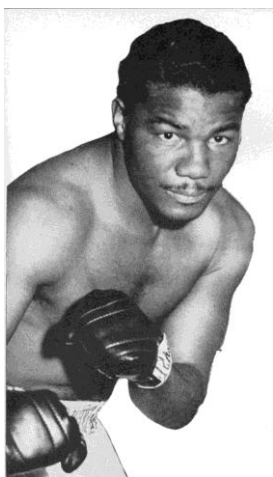


Henry Hank, One of Boxing's Forgotten Warriors

By Dan Cuoco



There are many stories of past greats and famous boxers that have been written and rewritten over the years. But what about the many who fought and made a name for themselves but seem to be forgotten as the years pass by. Henry Hank is one of them.

Henry was born Joseph Harrison in Greenville, Mississippi on February 9, 1935. He moved to Detroit with his parents when he was 6 years old. He later

changed his name to Jusuf Salaam when he embraced Islam in 1971, near the close of his professional career. Young 18-year-old Harrison took the name Henry Hank out of admiration for triple crown hall-of-famer Henry Armstrong.

Hank was a murderous punching middleweight with an aggressive style. In the late 1950s and early 1960s he was considered pound for pound one of the hardest punchers in boxing. He was always moving forward with his right hand cocked and ready to explode, and his left hand held below his waist ready to counter. He created an air of tension and excitement whenever he entered a ring. He fought with the cold cockiness of a man who knew exactly what he could do.

Inconsistency was his biggest downfall. He was either knocking guys out, or clowning his way to defeat. He was capable of having an off night when least expected, especially against clever boxers. The pattern was always the same. Henry would let them get away with murder in the early rounds; they usually would build up a points lead while he was enjoying himself; then, by the time he would get around to trying for a knockout he either had lost steam, or his opponent had solved his style. On other occasions he would come out firing in the early rounds and win by early knockout. It seemed he had to get hurt or cut, or knocked down, or not like his opponent to go all out. If he had a killer instinct who knows what he could have accomplished.

Henry made his professional debut 17 days after his 18th birthday on February 26, 1953 in Detroit against former University of Michigan boxing champion Del Monroe. Monroe was also making his professional debut and was

dropped three times in the first round, the final time for the full count. A splendid turnout of 10,124 on hand to witness Pat (Spunky) Lowry against Detroit's Tommy Leedle left the arena talking about Henry's impressive and devastating debut. Henry was just as devastating in his next two fights as he overwhelmed Earl Battle in one round and battered Toledo Golden Glove champion Bob Wilson helpless in the third round.

After a five month layoff the inexperienced Hank, 3-0-0 (3), came in as a last minute replacement against 24 year-old Jed Black. Black was a highly decorated amateur with an impressive professional record at the time of 20-1-0 (14). Henry gave a very good account of himself before losing a six round decision in his first start over four rounds. Henry finished the remainder of the year unbeaten with one stoppage win and two decisions.

Henry continued to hone his skills in 1954 winning two out of three decisions over fellow prospect Larue Harvey, fighting a draw with highly acclaimed amateur star Rudy Gwin, and stopping highly regarded Henry Bronko and Gene Poirier. His one round stoppage of Poirier was quite impressive because Poirier had never been stopped before and counted former welterweight champion Tony DeMarco among his victims.

Less than three weeks after stopping veteran Jesse Gray in four rounds, Henry was pitted against future welterweight champion Virgil Akins in his first eight rounder. The 26 year-old Akins entered the ring with a record of 23-13-0 (10) compiled over seven years in the ring. Needless to say, the more seasoned Akins won handily. Akins showed he could punch efficiently from any position. Henry was dropped for nine counts twice, from a right cross in the first round and from a beautiful left hook in the third. Defensively Akins blocked most of Henry's punches or rolled with them. Although he lost, it was an important learning experience. The 19 year-old Hank's record at the end of his second year as a professional stood at 14-3-1 (10).

1955 was not a good year for 20 year-old Hank. He engaged in five fights, winning two by knockout and losing three by decision. He started the year off with a bang by scoring a clean-cut second round knockout over the dangerous Chuck Coleman before dropping three straight six round decisions to Leffie Walker, Lloyd Triplett and Gordon Wallace. Henry was favored over both Walker and Triplett, but for the first time began to display his occasional lackadaisical approach to boxing that was to unfortunately define his career. He allowed both opponents to jump out to big early leads cocksure that he would land a big bomb to end the fight at any time. Against the seasoned Wallace, the former Canadian light-heavyweight champion, Henry was unlucky to come out on the short end of a split decision. On July 28th he traveled to Pittsburgh and stopped Bob Stecher in

three rounds. He did not return to the ring again until March 1956.

Henry returned to the ring in 1956 after an eight month layoff with renewed energy and enthusiasm. In his first bout back he stopped 23-year-old Cleveland prospect Rudy Gwin in four rounds to avenge an earlier draw. In April he returned home to Detroit and avenged another blot on his record with an eight round decision over Leffie Walker and in July he put away Chuck Craig in two rounds. The veteran Charley Cotton of Toledo, OH stopped Hank's four fight win streak with a ten round decision in Toledo on September 28th. The 25 year-old Cotton, 31-11-1 (20), coming off of two decision wins over Joey Giardello was just too experienced for the still young 21-year-old Hank.

Disillusioned with boxing, Henry only fought once in 1957 winning an eight round decision over Leffie Walker on June 15th in Bay City, Michigan in their rubber match.

1958 turned out to be Henry's breakout year. Returning to the ring after an eight month layoff and only appearing in his second fight in 17 months Henry avenged his last defeat with an eight round decision over the crafty Charlie Cotton. He then went on an eight fight knockout streak with knockouts over George Boddie, Sherman Williams, Rudy Ellis, Joe Fusco, old foes Charlie Cotton and Leffie Walker, Charlie Glover and Sherman Williams again. In the first William's fight, Williams was coming off an impressive win over previously undefeated Detroit knockout artist Jimmy Remson. Henry had no trouble with Williams and put him away in the first round. Henry followed with the biggest win of his career when he knocked out highly touted South Haven, Michigan prospect Rudy Ellis in the fourth round. The streak ended when another hot and cold fighter Ernie Burford, 17-4-0 (9) out hustled him in Detroit on November 25th. But, two weeks later Henry avenged yet another defeat when he outscored Burford in a ten rounder in Toledo, Ohio.

Henry returned to Toledo to start his 1959 campaign and again knocked out George Boddie (only Boddie's third knockout loss in 27 fights – he went the distance twice with Del Flanagan, and once with Spider Webb) and outpointed tough Philadelphian Jimmy Beecham. Then it was off to New Orleans for a series of fights that would carry him through the end of the year. First up for Henry was the veteran Charley Joseph. The 26 year-old Joseph had a record of 49-10-2 (18) and owned victories over Spider Webb, George Benton, Charlie Cotton, Holly Mims, Willie Vaughn, Milo Savage, Charley (Tombstone) Smith, and Jimmy Beecham. In 61 professional fights he had never been stopped. The fight turned out to be an exciting affair with Hank hammering away at Joseph with devastating results in the early

rounds. However, Joseph came back strong to take a good lead into the ninth because he was busier while Henry was only flurrying toward the end of each round. Henry came out fast to start the final round and dropped Joseph with a left hook. Joseph got up without a count and claimed it was a slip. The referee scored the fight for Hank 6-3-1, while the two judges had Joseph ahead 5-4-1. The decision was unpopular with the fans and they were immediately rematched.

Three weeks later they were at it again. A highly motivated Hank gave Joseph a terrific beating and the fight was stopped in the sixth round. This was the first time Joseph was stopped in 62 fights. This victory made Henry a local idol in New Orleans and matchmaker Lou Messina quickly capitalized on his popularity. Following the two Joseph fights, Henry was matched with the very capable and experienced 26 year-old Californian Willie Vaughn. Vaughn kept close to Henry for nine rounds and had an insurmountable lead. Henry realizing that his only chance for victory was by knockout pulled it off. Just seconds into the final round Hank caught Vaughn with a terrific left hook to the jaw. Vaughn's head hit the canvas with a thud as the crowd of 3,644 jumped to their feet yelling and screaming. Willie rolled over at the count of six in an effort to beat the ten count but to no avail. Then came his fight with Neal Rivers of Las Vegas. Rivers, like Vaughn, was more than holding his own with Henry for nine rounds. But in the tenth, "Hammering Hank" let go with his famous left hook and dropped Rivers on all fours. Rivers, game as they come, survived a nine-count, and ran into another battering. Bleeding from nose and mouth, and his right eye closing fast, the referee stopped the fight with only 20 seconds remaining.

On August 10th Henry headlined another card, this time against the very cagey Holly Mims of Washington, D.C. Mims, 46-18-6 (11), had met the best in his division and held victories over Johnny Bratton, Jose Basora, George Benton, Spider Webb, Jimmy Beecham, Lester Felton, Milo Savage, and Willie Troy. He also drew with Bobby Dykes and Bobby Boyd, while losing competitive decisions to Sugar Ray Robinson, Rocky Castellani, Joey Giardello, and Ronnie Delaney. In 70 fights he had never been stopped or badly hurt in a fight. Mims used his exceptional boxing and defensive skills to walk away with a unanimous decision.

A month later Henry had a return match with Neal Rivers, Henry had an easy go this time around. He dropped Neal in the second round, gave him a good pasting in the third and dropped him for the full count in the fourth with a left hook.

Two months after losing a decision to Holly Mims, Henry was back in the ring with him in a 12 rounder. Henry kept his record intact of not losing to the same

fighter twice as he wore down his 30 year-old adversary with a relentless attack. The win over Mims propelled him into the ratings for the first time. For the rating period ending October 1959, Henry entered in the number nine slot.

Two weeks after defeating Mims he was matched with the dangerous George Benton. The 26 year-old Philadelphian entered the ring with a record of 36-5-1 (19). His victims included Holly Mims, Charlie Joseph, Lester Felton, Joe Dorsey, Clarence Hinnant, Young Beau Jack and Bobby Boyd. Henry built up an early lead and entered the final round with a clear margin. But in the tenth he went after Benton as if he needed the round. He caught George with a left and a right causing George to hold on. Henry broke away from the clinch and buckled Benton's knees with a left hook and had Benton helpless on the ropes when the final bell came to his rescue. The decision in Henry's favor was unanimous.



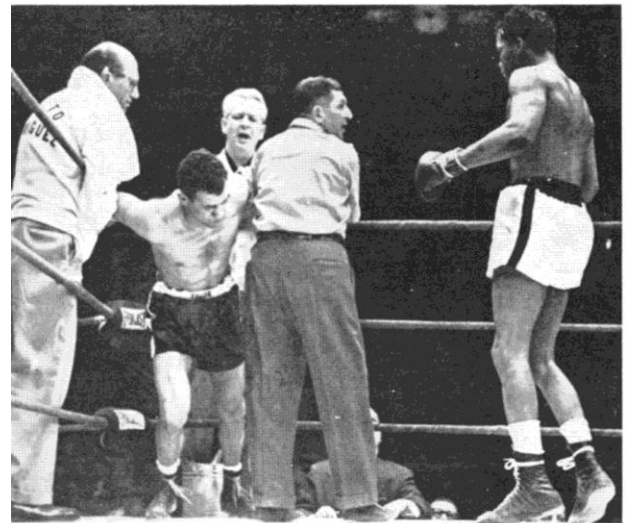
Henry's final fight for the year in New Orleans was against the number three ranked world light-heavyweight contender Jesse Bowdry of St. Louis. The 21 year-old Bowdry was a murderous puncher with a record of 27-3-0 (22). Bowdry, with a nine pound advantage in weight, entered the

ring a heavy favorite. Henry shocked Bowdry and his handlers with a tenth round knockout victory. Bowdry, insisting that he took Hank lightly asked for an immediate rematch. Six weeks later the two met in Chicago in a nationally televised fight. Henry was making his national TV debut and became an instant hit. In one of the best fights seen at the Chicago Stadium in years, Henry hurled bombs at Bowdry with such accuracy that he stopped him in the sixth after having him on the floor three times, twice in the third round and once again in the sixth round before referee Frank Sikora stopped the fight without bothering to count Bowdry out.

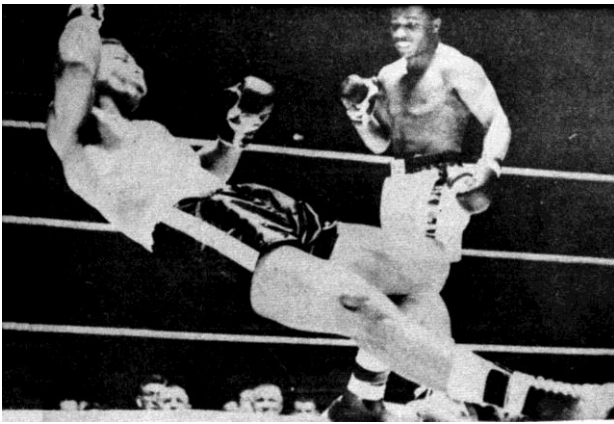
Less than a month later Henry, now the number four world ranked middleweight contender, was back on TV against number five world ranked light-heavyweight contender Sixto Rodriguez of San Anselmo, CA. The 22 year-old Rodriguez, who was also the California light-heavyweight champion, entered Chicago Stadium with a record of 23-2-2 (5) for their nationally televised fight.

Hank again excited Chicago fans and a nationally televised audience with an exciting and explosive performance. Noted boxing journalist Robert Thornton: "Hank fights like a combination Bob Satterfield-Clarence Henry, driving in all the time, right hand cocked way back ready to explode."

Henry came out trying for a kayo with every punch, but the shifty Rodriguez made him miss his punches by just a hair. In the fourth a cocky Hank dropped both his hands to his sides and shoved out his chin and defied Rodriguez to hit him. Sixto tried his best, but Henry wouldn't budge. In the sixth Henry finally got to Sixto when he staggered him with a right hand. Henry moved in for the kill and jolted Sixto with a left hook that sent him into the ropes and followed up with another right hand that spun him around. The referee jumped in at this juncture and called a halt to the fight before Henry could inflict any further damage.



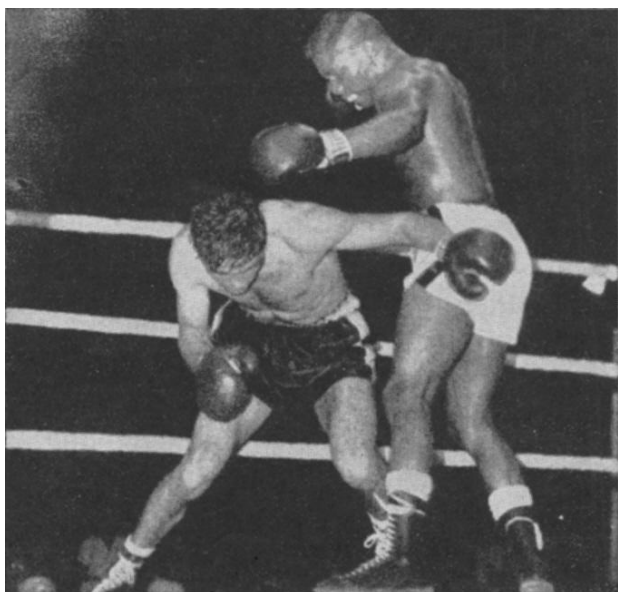
The hot Hank was now off to San Francisco to meet former top ranking middleweight contender Rory Calhoun of White Plains, NY. The 25 year-old Calhoun came into the fight with a record of 43-9-2 (21). His victory ledger included Dick Tiger, Rocky Castellani, Joey Giambra, Bobby Boyd, Franz Szuzina, Randy Sandy, Yolande Pompey, Ralph (Tiger) Jones, and draws with Joey Giardello and Dick Tiger. Henry was at his devastating best when he put away Calhoun in two rounds. Rory had a slight point advantage when Henry unleashed a wicked left hook that sent Rory crashing heavily to the floor. Rory barely made it to his feet before the fatal ten count but was in no shape to defend himself and the referee wisely stopped the fight.



Henry was now clamoring for a world title shot against either World Middleweight Champion Paul Pender or National Boxing Association (NBA) Middleweight Champion Gene Fullmer. Hank was the NBA's second ranking contender behind Germany's Gustav Scholz. His record stood at 42-10-1 (31); he was on a seven fight win streak; and he had won 22 of his last 25 fights, avenging all three of his losses.

With both champions expressing no interest in getting in the ring with him he decided to remain busy hoping that public demand would force either champion into the ring with him.

Less than a month after his sensational victory over Calhoun an over confident Hank took on unranked San Francisco middleweight Hank Casey. The 25 year-old Casey was the reigning California middleweight champion and possessed a fine record 23-2-5 (4). Although not a hard puncher, Casey was an excellent boxer with a rock hard chin. Regardless of whether or not Henry was at his best, Casey made him miss quite often by rolling with the punches, slipping in counters and consistently beating Hank to the punch. When Henry did land Casey was able to absorb Henry's best shots.

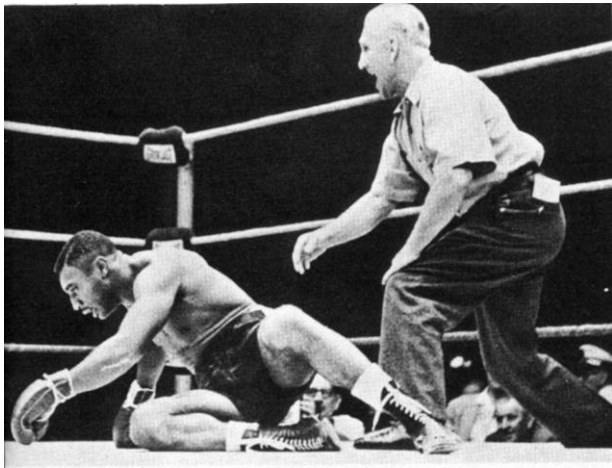


The unanimous decision was quite popular with the pro Henry Hank crowd. The loss dropped Hank to fifth in both the Ring and NBA ratings.

Although disappointed by the loss, the still confident Henry was back in the ring six weeks later against tough hard-punching Argentine slugger Victor Zalazar. The 24 year-old Zalazar was coming off two tough losses by decision to Dick Tiger and Yama Bahama. Among his victims in his 20-5-1 (15) ledger were Yama Bahama, Wilfie Greaves, Tony Dupas and Andres Selpa. All five of his losses were by decision. Fighting before his hometown fans in Detroit for the first time in nearly 18 months he didn't disappoint. Henry swarmed all over his rugged opponent and shook him up early in the opening round. Henry backed off during the second and third rounds. In the fourth after moving back from a furious exchange of infighting Henry caught Victor flush with a terrific left uppercut. The punch hurt Zalazar badly and Henry moved in on his rubbery legged opponent and landed a beautiful three punch combination that dropped him flat on his face. It was at least a full minute before Victor who had never been knocked down or out before, could be revived.

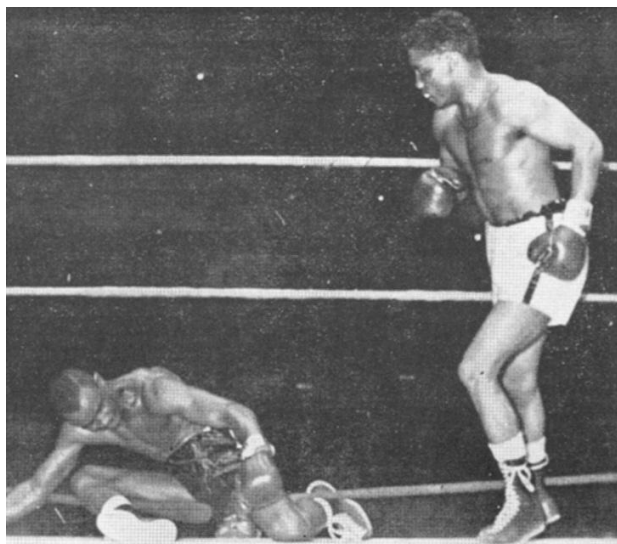
Two months after his upset loss to Hank Casey, Henry preserved his record of having never lost a rematch by outworking Casey in a ten rounder in New Orleans. Casey stated after the fight. "Henry would be an even greater, only he needs a fire built under him. I built one fire by beating him last time. So did those other guys."

Henry's next televised appearance was in a rematch with hot middleweight prospect Rudy Ellis. Since his knockout loss to Henry over two years previous Rudy had won seven of his nine fights: defeating Jesse Smith twice on points, outscoring Rory Calhoun and scoring impressive knockouts over Jimmy Beecham and Bobby Boyd. These victories had brought him to the cusp of a world rating and he was anxious to defeat the third ranked Hank and avenge his only knockout loss and propel himself into the world ratings. Although Henry was favored to again defeat the talented Ellis, the end came sooner than expected. Henry didn't come out for the first round looking for an early knockout. But after a couple of minutes of feeling one another out Ellis left a big wide opening and quick as a flash Hank landed a potent left hook to the stomach and an even more powerful right hand to the chin. Ellis was down and out at 2 minutes and 30 seconds of the first round.



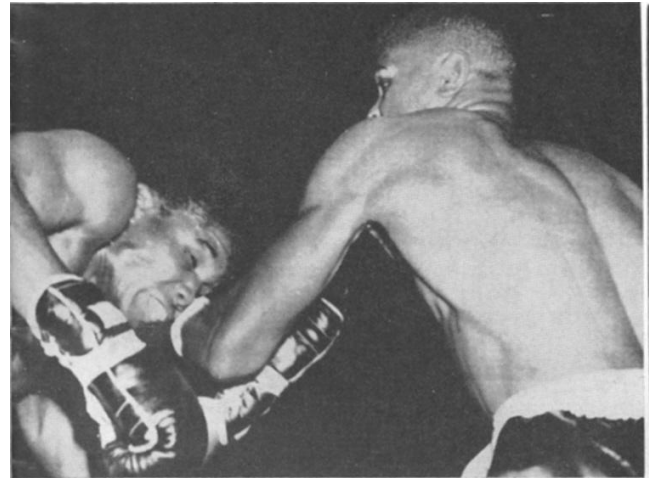
Henry's title aspirations took a severe hit in September 1960 when unheralded and unranked Jesse Smith of Philadelphia held him to an upset draw in Chicago and two weeks later Henry lost his rubber match with Hank Casey in Casey's hometown of San Francisco.

Smith, 28-6-3 (21), loser twice to Hank victim Rudy Ellis, earned a draw by simply outthrusting the overconfident and lackadaisical Hank. Henry dropped Smith in the closing moments of the last round to pull out the draw.



Two weeks later Henry was in San Francisco determined to vindicate himself after being held to a draw by Smith. In the opposite corner was San Francisco's shifty, smooth-boxing Hank Casey. Henry was the odds-on favorite to defeat Casey. But, once again Henry disappointed when he lost a lop-sided decision to the talented Casey, who also became the first fighter to defeat Henry twice. Casey used flicking lefts and sharp rights to build an insurmountable lead. Henry realizing he was behind on points began scoring heavily to the body and head in the last round but was too tired to pull

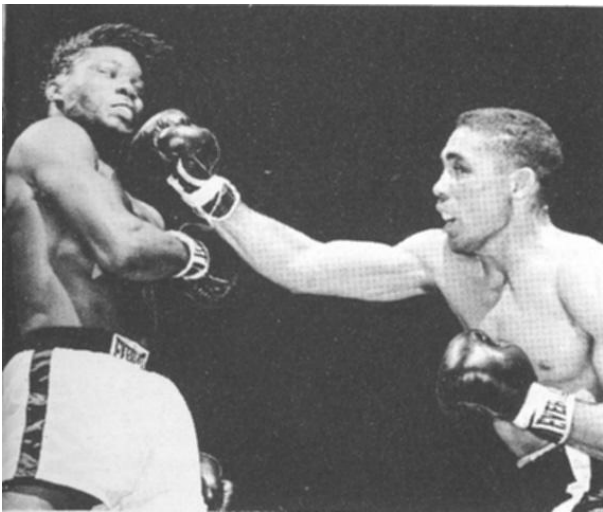
out the fight with one of his patented finishes. The loss saw Henry's standing in the middleweight division plummet to number nine.



Henry returned to the friendly confines of Detroit for his next fight with veteran New York middleweight Randy Sandy. Henry won an easy decision despite fighting the last five rounds with a severely bruised left hand.



On November 9, 1960 Henry made his New York debut when he headlined a card at Madison Square Garden against number ten ranked middleweight contender Gene (Ace) Armstrong of Elizabeth, NJ. Armstrong displayed little regard of Henry's tremendous punching power by outspeeding, outboxing and at times outfighting him. Henry was able to score with some lusty body punches but he had difficulty reaching Armstrong's chin with solid punches. Armstrong was able to duck and slip Henry's power punches. Offensively Armstrong looked good as he used an effective left to jab and hook and sneaked in an occasional right to the head and frequently had the better of the fast exchanges. The judges scoring in Armstrong's favor was strange to say the least. Judge Nick Gamboli 8-1-1; Judge Frank Forbes 6-3-1; Referee Al Berl 5-4-1.



What a difference three months can make. Henry went from a high point on August 3, 1960 (his first round kayo over Rudy Ellis) to his loss to Armstrong on November 19, 1960. During that period he went from being a top world rated contender to unranked.

On March 29, 1961 Henry returned to the scene of his biggest triumphs New Orleans and stopped Cleveland's Clarence Alford in seven rounds. Feeling revigared after the victory Henry was ready for a new assault at the brass ring – the middleweight title.

On July 10, 1961 Henry and future hall-of-famer Joey Giardello appeared in the first boxing attraction at the new Convention Arena segment of Cobo Hall. 6,693 witnessed an outstanding fight between Hank and Giardello, 86-20-6 (33). Hank and the 7th ranked Giardello engaged in an exciting slugfest that had the crowd going wild. Both fighters fought furiously throwing punches at a steady clip with neither fighter willing to back off. Giardello used his left jab throughout, trying to set up Hank for his sharp right cross. Hank applied constant pressure with his aggressive free-swinging style. It was Hank's harder and more accurate punches that earned him a popular unanimous decision. With the victory Henry reentered The Ring world ratings at number eight.

Henry took another step in his upward march to the top when he outpointed durable Franz Szuzina of Germany 46-21-14 (24). Henry managed to shake up his opponent on several occasions to win a unanimous decision. The win also moved Henry into the number six slot in the world ratings.

Henry continued his winning ways with a seventh round stoppage of light-heavyweight Jerry Luedee in New Haven, CT and number six ranked light-heavyweight contender Chic Calderwood of Scotland in Detroit. Both victories were instrumental in moving Henry to a number five ranking.

Calderwood, 30-1-1 (22), made his U.S. debut against Hank in Detroit before an excellent crowd of 7,500 vocal fans. Henry set the pace from the opening bell. A left hook to the body dropped Calderwood in the second round. Calderwood was game as they come, but couldn't match Henry's punching power in losing a unanimous decision.



Henry, however, couldn't seem to handle prosperity well. After his impressive victory over Calderwood Henry traveled to Miami to take on Jamaica's Allan Harmon, 19-7-3 (13), an unranked light-heavyweight in a tune-up fight for his rematch with Joey Giardello. Old habits caught up to Henry once again when an unmotivated Hank was held to a ten round draw. But Henry was never one to let a bad performance jeopardize his next start. And he proved it when he and Joey Giardello engaged in a slugfest that was chosen The Ring magazine's fight of the year.

On January 30, 1962, 20 days after his draw with Harmon, Henry met Giardello at Convention Hall in Philadelphia before 6,000 fans.

The Ring's coverage of their epic battle follows:

One of the hardest fought, bloodiest fights seen in many months was the middleweight setto between 31 year old Joey Giardello of Philadelphia and 26 year old Henry Hank of Detroit fought before 6,000 fans at the Convention Hall in Philadelphia.

"Giardello took a frightful pasting in the first round. He was knocked back on his heels by the fury of Henry's attack. In the second a left hook split open a deep wound in Joey's upper lip and it bled profusely for the remainder of the contest.

Joey showed plenty of courage and came back to carry the fight to Hank in the next three rounds. He outboxed Hank, who has a tendency to "loaf". Henry landed the harder blows but he fought in spurts late in each round while Joey kept his jabs and rights to the body working most of the time. Hank picked up the pace

and had a shade the better of it in the sixth with a strong closing rally.

The seventh was one of the best rounds of the fight. Both got off good flurries but Hank had Joey in trouble when he cornered him against the ropes and pounded away.

Giardello came fighting back to hold a slight edge in the eighth and ninth as once again Hank let him take the play away from him.

The final round was a humdinger as Hank went all out. Joey tried to match him punch for punch, but didn't have the fire power or stamina left and it was a good round for Henry.

The officials scored it 47-46, 46-45 for Giardello and 46-46 for a draw.

Some fans didn't like the verdict.



The loss didn't hurt Henry's standing in The Ring ratings where he remained in the fifth slot, while Giardello moved into the fourth slot.

Henry exacted revenge on Jamaica's Allan Harmon in his next fight held in Detroit. Henry cut Harmon's eye in the first round and piled up a good lead before the fight was stopped in the seventh round.

Three weeks later a confident Henry took on top rated



Dick Tiger in a nationally televised fight from New York's Madison Square Garden. Future hall-of-famer Tiger scored a nearly flawless victory over Henry.

Although the official scores were 10-0, 9-0-1, and 8-1-1, the fight was much closer and tougher than the scoring would indicate. Henry was dangerous throughout the fight, but Tiger was just too rugged, durable and persistent for him. Tiger consistently landed his left hook and jabs with uncanny accuracy and kept Henry off balance with body blows that hurt. Henry landed many effective blows of his own in the early rounds before he tired, but Tiger's tight defense and solid chin helped stop Henry's offense. In the end Henry was simply outscored, out-maneuvered and out-hustled by a far superior fighter.

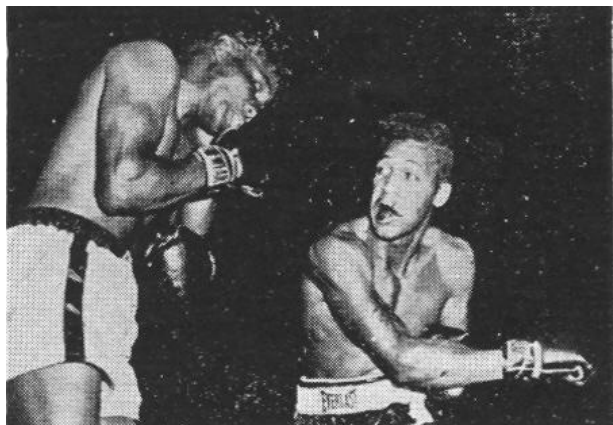
Henry traveled to Glasgow, Scotland for his next fight against 27 year-old John (Cowboy) McCormick, 32-4-0 (14). McCormick was down for two counts in the first from heavy rights to the jaw. In between these knockdowns he dropped Hank. In the second Hank again dropped McCormick for a count of "8." With his face crimson red, McCormick boxed on the retreat and scored well over the aggressive Hank. As the bout progressed McCormick overcame Hank's big early lead by coolly boxing on the retreat. In the final two rounds McCormick stood toe to toe with Hank, eventually gaining the upper hand to gain a points win from sole arbiter referee Frank Wilson.

The loss to McCormick dropped Henry to the number eight position in The Ring ratings.



Road warrior Hank's travels brought him to Louisville, KY to take on hot prospect (and future NBA heavyweight champion) Jimmy Ellis. Although the 22 year-old Ellis was only taking part in his 13th

professional fight he had an extensive amateur background which included an amateur victory over Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali). As a professional his record was 11-1-0 (4). His resume included points wins over solid veterans Holly Mims (who won their first fight on points), Johnny Morris, Wilfie Greaves and Johnny Alford; and knockout victories over Rory Calhoun, Rudolph Bent, Arley Seifer and Clarence Riley. Henry proved too ringwise and won a unanimous decision.



After the Jimmy Ellis fight Henry decided to enter the light-heavyweight ranks. Henry stated that making the middleweight limit was hurting his stamina and effected his last three efforts against Tiger, McCormick and Ellis. He stated. "I couldn't get any steam on my punches."

In his first fight as a light-heavyweight Henry couldn't have picked a tougher opponent than Peru's Mauro Mina. This is a true testimony to Henry's fighting spirit. He never ducked any opponent and fought the best middleweights and light-heavyweights of his era. The 29 year-old Mina was the world number two ranked light-heavyweight and was making his North American debut against Henry in Madison Square Garden. Mina entered



the ring with a solid professional record of 39-2-2 (21). . Mina, a natural light-heavyweight, was bigger and stronger than Henry (who was in essence to today's standards a super middleweight). But in the first four rounds a tentative Mina back-pedaled as Henry forced the action. Mina displayed a strong chin, however, whenever Henry was able to reach him. Several of Henry's hardest punches exploded on Mina's jaw without effect. In the fifth, Mina became aggressive and began to break a tiring Henry down with a versatile attack to both head and body. It was obvious that the extra weight Henry was carrying was a handicap rather than a help. Henry gradually wilted under Mina's steady assault and fought the remainder of the fight on the retreat aside from an occasional rally. The decision in Mina's favor was split. Mina 6-3-1 and 5-3-2, and Hank 6-4. This ended Henry's 1962 campaign. At year's end he world ranking changed from number six middleweight to number eight light-heavyweight.

Later he would go on to beat future hall-of-famer Bob Foster (Foster's only professional loss to a light-heavyweight). Unfortunately a serious eye injury would end Mauro's career prematurely while still at the top of his game

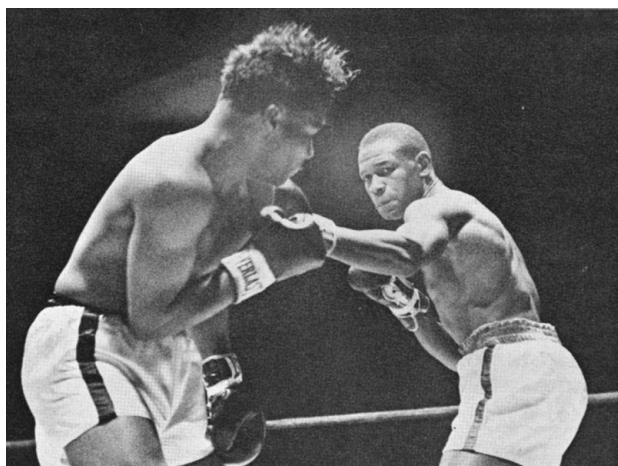
Henry started his 1963 campaign in Oakland California where he engaged in two fights: a ten round decision over old foe Sixto Rodriguez and a one round knockout victory over Dick Young. He returned to Detroit where he took on local favorite Ed Zaremba for the Michigan Light-Heavyweight Title. The unbeaten but untested Zaremba, 15-0-1 (13) was lucky Henry was in a charitable mood. The match was scheduled for 12 (two-minute) rounds and went the distance because Henry generously allowed his outclassed opponent to go the distance.

On October 29, 1963, Henry, the fifth world ranking light-heavyweight was matched with Eddie Cotton of Seattle, WA, the third world ranking light-heavyweight for Michigan's version of the light-heavyweight championship. Although the winner would only be recognized as champion by the State of Michigan both fighters were confident that a victory would strengthen the winner's chances for a title fight against world champion Willie Pastrano.

The 36 year-old Cotton, 48-14-1 (26) was a late bloomer whose only losses in the past three years had been to Harold Johnson in an N.B.A Light-Heavyweight title fight and top-ranked Mauro Mina in Lima, Peru. For the 28 year-old Hank, 56-16-3 (37), this was his biggest profile fight in years. Unfortunately for Henry his many disappointing performances had jaded his once adorning fans and only 800 showed up for his fight in Flint, Michigan. Cotton, with a six-inch reach advantage, won the fight on the strength of his strong left jab, which he

landed with frequency on Henry's face. Cotton's jab was not only an offensive weapon, but a defensive one as well. He kept the hard-hitting Hank off balance by stabbing him with the left, throwing Henry's timing off and avoiding any of Henry's murderous punches. In addition, the crafty veteran also employed a steady stream of right hands to the body that eventually sapped some of Henry's strength. Henry's best round was the ninth when he caught Cotton with a powerful left hook that shook him badly. However, Cotton was able to survive by cleverness and a straight left jab. Henry's rally in the last two rounds failed to turn the tide. After 15 rounds the referee and one scored the fight for Cotton 146-140 and the other judge 148-147.

A thoroughly dejected Hank stated after the fight: *"Why is it I can't win, though I know I deserve the decision. In Philadelphia I easily whipped Giardello and the decision was given to Joey. I did the same with John McCormick in our fight in Scotland, but he got the verdict. Now this one. I was not beaten by Eddie. I kept after him from the opening bell and what did he do? He kept backing away. I think its time I quit the ring and got myself a taxicab and went out working. There's no use trying to win."*

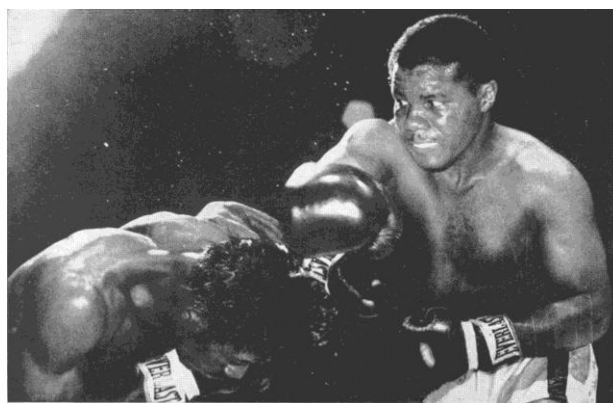


He should have quit after that fight. His confidence was at an all-time low and his record since his win over Chic Calderwood was 5-5-1. It was all down hill for Henry after that. But he didn't quit. Henry had gone through a lot of bad streaks before and he didn't let them get him down too long. He was still world ranked at number seven so he decided to continue. Five weeks after his loss to Cotton he was in Philadelphia in a nationally televised ten rounder with future hall-of-famer and former light-heavyweight champion Harold Johnson, now the number one world ranked light-heavyweight. Henry must have rationalized that a win over the number one contender would put him right back in the thick of a title opportunity.

But if that was Henry's intent he didn't show the intensity needed to defeat Johnson. Johnson appeared somewhat paunchy even though he only weighed 176 pounds. Henry at 172 pounds was much faster but did

not seem to take the fight seriously and was only impressive in the sixth and eighth rounds with his wild-swinging bobbing and weaving attack. Henry was outboxed the rest of the way. Hank reached the peak of his clowning in the second, third and ninth rounds when he put on a woozy, semi-stunned act after receiving a few punches on the head on each occasion. The 1,353 in attendance booed his performance in the ninth round. The loss was further damaging as he was dropped from the world ratings.

Henry took eight months off and returned to face number nine world ranked light-heavyweight (number 5 in the W.B.A.) Johnny Persol of Brooklyn, NY in the last Gillette televised Fight of the Week at the Garden. After twenty years Gillette decided not to renew their television contract that began on September 29, 1944, with Willie Pep against Chalky Wright in a featherweight title match. For 29 year old Henry it was just another fight, but for 24 year-old Persol it was a major crossroad fight. Persol entered their August 21, 1964 fight at Madison Square Garden with a pro record of 12-1-0 (3). His victims included Eddie Cotton, Carl (Bobo) Olson, Allen Thomas, Herschel Jacobs and Johnny Alford. His only loss was by technical knockout to Eddie Cotton in their return match. Henry a 3-1 underdog fought Persol toe-to-toe throughout the ten rounds and gained a draw. Persol was the better boxer at long range, scoring with stiff jabs and right crosses. Henry had the edge in close ripping hooks to the midsection and face, and scoring with short powerful uppercuts, but neither fighter gained more than a minute's advantage. It was as close a bout as had been seen at the Garden in years.



Henry accepted an offer to meet 27 year-old up and coming light-heavyweight Bob Foster 16-3-0 (12) in Norfolk, VA. Hank and future hall-of-famer Foster engaged in an all action fight that had the fans screaming throughout. In the middle of the ninth round Foster sank a terrific left hook to Hank's breadbasket, dropping him for the count of 9. Referee Paddy Mills decided Hank was not in condition to continue and called the bout to an end. This would turn out to be the only time Henry failed to finish a fight in 97 professional fights.

Henry's stoppage loss to Foster looked like he had finally hit the end of the line. But as it turned out Henry still had enough left to make another run at a world rating.

In his very next fight, Henry traveled to Oakland, CA to take on number seven ranked world ranked light-heavyweight contender Roger Rouse, 21-4-1 (18), of San Jose, CA. Rouse went into the fight a 2-1 favorite over the hot-and-cold Hank who was now viewed as over the hill. But, Henry had one of his on nights and walked away with a convincing decision. Rouse jumped on Henry early and looked like he was on his way to an early kayo. Henry came to life in the third round and took control of the fight from the fourth through the seventh by bullying Rouse and nailing him with overhand rights to the head. Henry had his biggest round in the sixth when he dropped Roger for a nine count from a thunderous right cross. Roger rallied in the ninth and carried over into the tenth, by jabbing and keeping Henry from getting off with his heavy artillery. Henry's impressive victory earned him a number ten ranking in The Ring and a number seven ranking in the WBA.

How tough was Henry? His twelve round rematch with murderous punching Bob Foster says it all. Before the largest crowd ever in the Municipal Auditorium in New Orleans (7,805) Henry put on one of the gutsiest performances ever witnessed in a New Orleans ring. Foster used his left jab like a rapier as he closed Hank's left eye in the very first round and kept pumping it into his battered features the full route. Henry was the aggressor as he kept moving forward, at times running after his man, but no matter how fast he went, he could not dodge the left of Foster. The fight was closer than the scores of 10-0-2, 9-1-2 and 10-1-1 indicated. Henry landed some good shots, but never had Foster in trouble. He snapped Foster's head back with a right just at the bell ending the sixth round and both men continued to battle after the gong, until the their seconds broke them apart. In the eleventh Henry shook Bob with an over hand right on the jaw, but Foster calmly jabbed his way out of danger. They also mixed it up after the bell as the crowd roared their approval.



Henry hung on for six more years and become a trial horse for younger fighters building a reputation. During that stretch (1966-1972) he went 5-10, with three knockouts. He did have one more brief flirtation with The Ring ratings when he stopped Mark Tessman on cuts on December 4, 1968 in the middle of their three-fight trilogy. His final appearance in the world ratings was in June 1969.

During his 19 years in the ring he faced the best fighters of his era, including five International Boxing Hall of Famers: Joey Giardello, Dick Tiger, Bob Foster, Harold Johnson and George Benton. Moreover, he was a rated contender for 59 months in two divisions, middleweight and light-heavyweight. His first appearance as a world rated contender was December 1959 and his last appearance was June 1969. His final ring ledger was 64-31-4 with 40 kayos. He was stopped once.

In 1971, near the close of his professional career he embraced Islam and changed his legal name from Joseph Harrison to Jusuf Salaam.

During his career Henry worked part time at the Detroit Zoo to supplement his ring earnings. After his retirement from the ring Henry went to work full-time for the Detroit Zoo as a Zookeeper.

Henry died on July 2, 2004 at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit from complications of Alzheimer's disease. He was 69.

My thanks to Michigan boxing historian Bill Miley of IBRO for his insights into Henry's career and for his valuable critique of this article.



HENRY HANK

(Joseph Harrison)

(Jusuf Salaam) Converted to Islam in 1971

NICKNAME: Hammering Henry
BORN: Feb 9, 1935; Greenville, MISS.
DIED: July 2, 2004, Detroit, MI.
HEIGHT: 5-10
WEIGHT: 147-182 lbs
RACE: Black
MANAGERS: Jim Bowlin (1953-1961), Harry Baxter (1961-1966), Andy (Pop) Brown (1966-1972)
First Rated: December 1959 (Middleweight)
Last Rated: June 1969 (Light Heavyweight)
Months Rated: 59
Best Rating: 4 (Middleweight)
NBA Rating: 3 (Middleweight), period ending September 15, 1960

TB	KO	WD	WF	D	LD	LF	KO	by	ND	NC
97	40	24	0	4	30	0	1	0	0	0

1953

Feb 26 Del Monroe, Detroit, Mi KO 1
Mar 12 Earl Batie, Detroit, Mi KO 1
Apr 2 Bob Wilson, Detroit, Mi TKO 3
Sep 29 Jed Black, Grand Rapids, Mi L 6
Oct 20 Howard Calloway, Lansing, Mi TKO 3
Dec 8 Howard Calloway, Kalamazoo, Mi W 4
Dec 31 Tommy Darrough, Detroit, Mi W 6

1954

Jan 11 Rudy Gwin, Detroit, Mi D 4
Jan 25 Bob Jackson, Detroit, Mi KO 3
Mar 18 Larue Harvey, Lansing, Mi W 6
Apr 26 Larue Harvey, Detroit, Mi L 4
May 27 Ernest Mosley, Muskegon, Mi KO 3
Jul 13 Henry Bronko, Detroit, Mi KO 5
Jul 20 Larue Harvey, Detroit, Mi W 6
Aug 3 Gene Poirer, Detroit, Mi TKO 1
Aug 19 Larry Bolez, Saginaw, Mi TKO 6
Oct 7 Jesse Gray, Saginaw, Mi TKO 4
Oct 26 Virgil Akins, Detroit, Mi L 8

1955

Feb 15 Chuck Coleman, Detroit, Mi KO 2
Mar 5 Leffie Walker, Saginaw, Mi L 6
Mar 8 Lloyd Triplett, Chicago, IL L 6
May 31 Gordon Wallace, Detroit, Mi L 6
Jul 28 Bob Stecher, Warren, Oh TKO 3

1956

Mar 28 Rudy Gwin, Cleveland, Oh TKO 4
Apr 28 Leffie Walker, Detroit, Mi W 8
Jul 31 Chuck Craig, Windsor, Ont, Can KO 2
Sep 28 Charlie Cotton, Toledo, Oh L 10

1957

Jun 15 Leffie Walker, Bay City, Mi W 8

1958

Feb 22 Charlie Cotton, Detroit, Mi W 8
Mar 22 George Boddie, Detroit, Mi KO 3
Apr 26 Sherman Williams, Windsor, Ont TKO 1
May 28 Rudy Ellis, Chicago, IL KO 4
Jul 12 Joe Fusco, Detroit, Mi KO 3
Aug 23 Charlie Cotton, Detroit, Mi TKO 9
Sep 8 Leffie Walker, Pontiac, Mi KO 6
Sep 17 Charlie Glover, Louisville, Ky KO 1
Nov 5 Sherman Williams, Louisville, Ky KO 8
Nov 25 Ernie Burford, Detroit, Mi L 10
Dec 15 Ernie Burford, Toledo, Oh W 10

1959

Feb 3 George Boddie, Toledo, Oh KO 3
Mar 3 Jimmy Beecham, Toledo, Oh W 10
Mar 23 Charley Joseph, New Orleans, La L 10
Apr 13 Charley Joseph, New Orleans, La TKO 6
Jun 15 Willie Vaughn, New Orleans, La KO 10
Jul 13 Neal Rivers, New Orleans, La TKO 10
Aug 10 Holly Mims, New Orleans, La L 10

Sep 7 Neal Rivers, New Orleans, La KO 4
Oct 12 Holly Mims, New Orleans, La W 12
Oct 26 George Benton, New Orleans, La W 10
Dec 7 Jesse Bowdry, New Orleans, La KO 10

1960

Jan 27 Jesse Bowdry, Chicago, IL TKO 6
Feb 17 Sixto Rodriguez, Chicago, IL TKO 6
Apr 25 Rory Calhoun, San Francisco TKO 2
May 16 Hank Casey, New Orleans, La L 10
Jun 30 Victor Zalazar, Detroit, Mi KO 4
Jul 11 Hank Casey, New Orleans, La W 10
Aug 3 Rudy Ellis, Chicago, IL KO 1
Sep 14 Jesse Smith, Chicago, IL D 10
Sep 29 Hank Casey, San Francisco, Ca L 10
Oct 21 Randy Sandy, Detroit, Mi W 10
Nov 19 Gene Armstrong, New York, NY L 10

1961

Mar 29 Clarence Alford, New Orleans TKO 7
Jul 10 Joey Giardello, Detroit, Mi W 10
Aug 21 Franz Szuzina, Detroit, Mi W 10
Oct 23 Jerry Luedee, New Haven, Ct TKO 7
Dec 15 Chic Calderwood, Detroit, Mi W 10

1962

Jan 10 Allan Harmon, Miami Beach, FL D 10
Jan 30 Joey Giardello, Philadelphia, Pa L 10
Mar 6 Allan Harmon, Detroit, Mi TKO 7
Mar 31 Dick Tiger, New York, NY L 10
Jun 14 John McCormack, Glasgow, Scotland L 8
Sep 1 Jimmy Ellis, Louisville, Ky W 10
Nov 24 Mauro Mina, New York, NY L 10

1963

Feb 11 Sixto Rodriguez, Oakland, Ca W 10
Mar 25 Dick Young, Oakland, Ca KO 1
Jul 20 Ed Zaremba, Jackson, Mi W 12
(Won Michigan Light-Heavyweight Title)
Oct 29 Eddie Cotton, Flint, Mi L 15
(Michigan version of the Light Heavyweight Championship)

1964

Dec 6 Harold Johnson, Philadelphia, Pa L 10
Aug 21 Johnny Persol, New York, NY D 10
Dec 11 Bob Foster, Norfolk, Va TKO by 9

1965

Apr 5 Roger Rouse, Oakland, Ca W 10
Jul 26 Bob Foster, New Orleans, La L 12

1966

Sep 13 Marion Connors, Canton, Oh L 10
Dec 12 Herschel Jacobs, New Orleans, La L 10

1967

Apr 15 Roger Rouse, Missoula, Mt L 10
Sep 27 Leslie Borden, Billings, Mt KO 4
Oct 16 Eddie Jones, Las Vegas, Nv L 10

1968

Apr 16 Mark Tessman, Houston, Tx L 10
Sep 11 Manny Quinney, Indianapolis TKO 7
Oct 24 Willie McMillan, Indianapolis W 10
Dec 4 Mark Tessman, Indianapolis, In TKO 6

1969

Jun 17 Mark Tessman, Houston, Tx L 10
Aug 8 Terry Lee, Oakland, Ca W 10
Dec 16 Hal Carroll, Syracuse, NY L 10

1970

Mar 11 Charlie Green, New York, NY L 10

1971

(Inactive)

1972

Feb 10 Humphrey McBride, Ardmore, OK L 10
Aug 7 Andy Kendall, Milwaukee, WI L 10