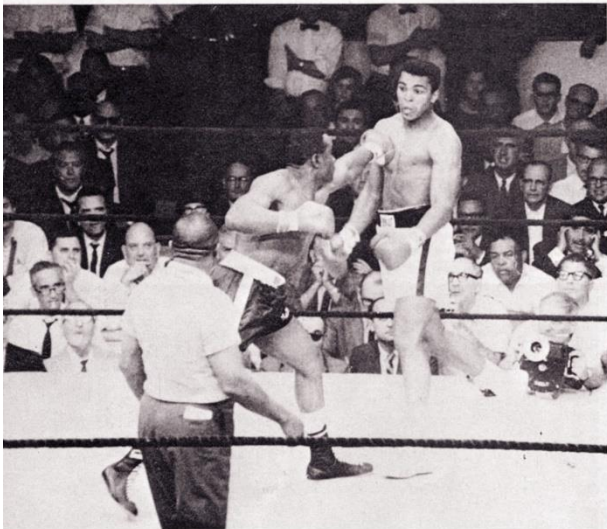


LISTON KAYO BY CLAY IN FIRST, MARCIANO DECKING BY MOORE, ALIKE



On September 21, 1955, before 61,574 witnesses in Yankee Stadium, Rocky Marciano, defending the world's heavyweight championship for the last time, stopped Archie Moore in the ninth round. The Rock, decked only twice in his career, hit the canvas in the second round but was up at the count of four.

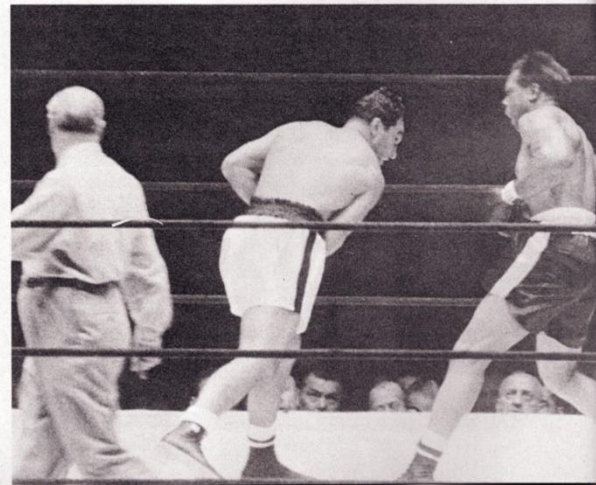
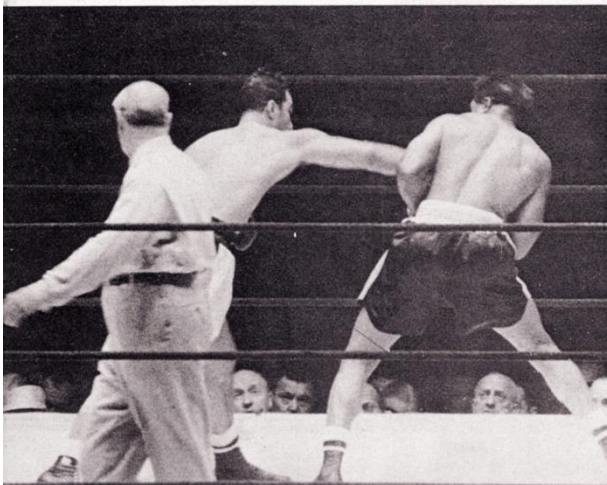
On May 25, 1965, in a hockey rink at Lewiston, Me., Cassius Clay knocked out Sonny Liston, for the second time, in the first round.

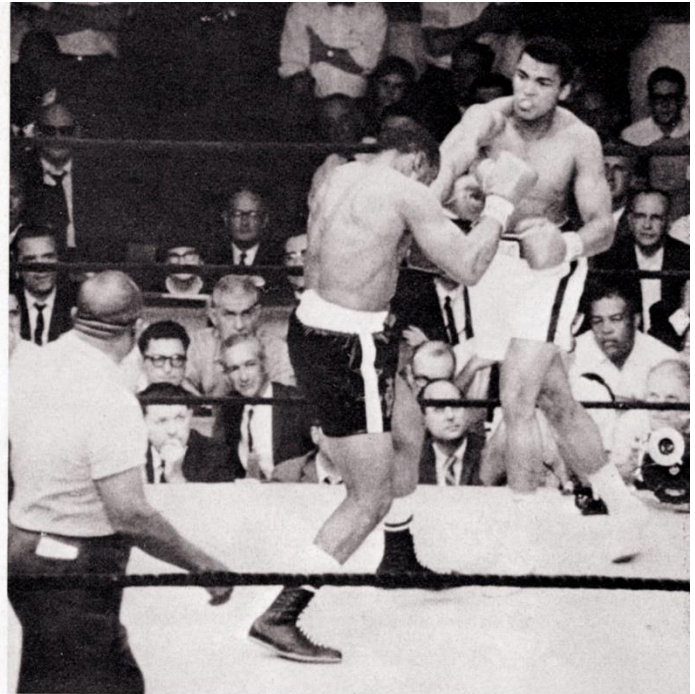
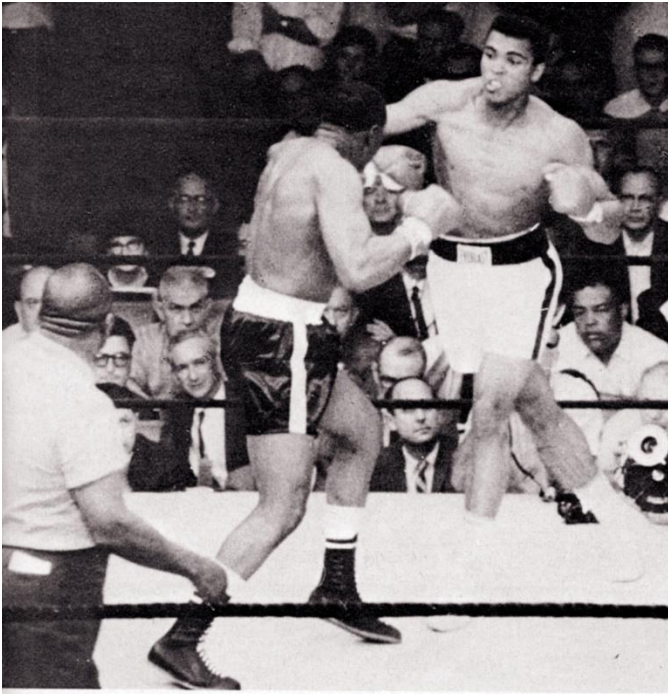
In some quarters the bona fides of the Maine result has been questioned, even to the point of denying that Liston had been hit at all. There is a striking analogy between the right which decked Marciano, and the right which stopped Liston. They were odd punches. But they were effective punches, nevertheless. They proved, especially in the Maine fight, that a hard, glancing blow could deck a heavyweight—knock him out, in fact, as Clay demonstrated against Sonny Boy.

Above, Clay is moving out of range of a left and setting up his taking advantage of the opening.

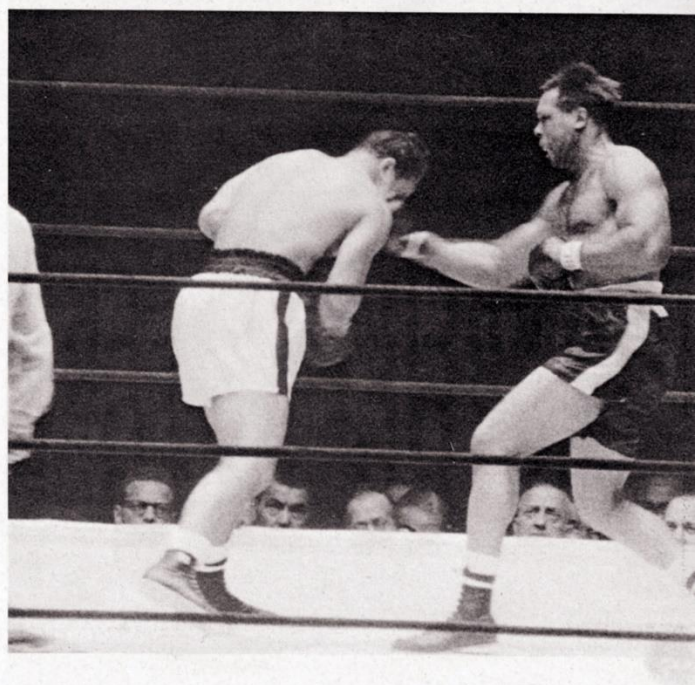
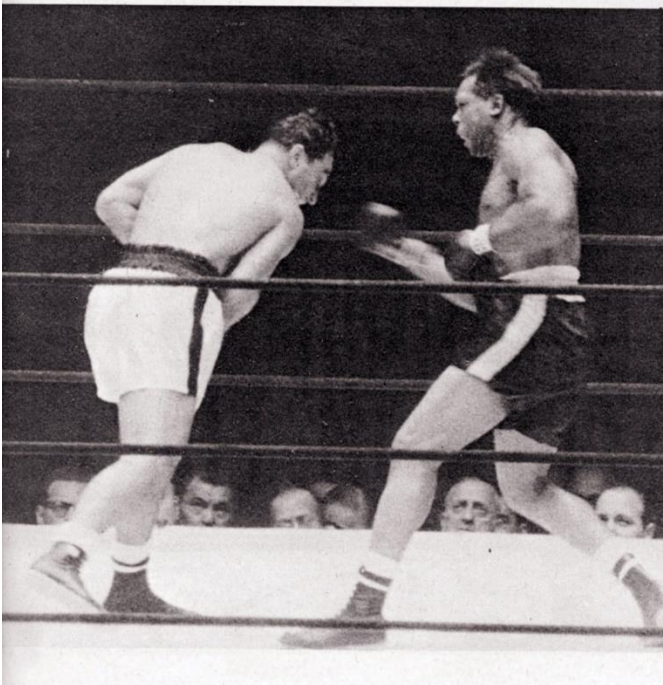
Below, we see Marciano missing with his right and leaving himself open for the slicing punch that floored him.

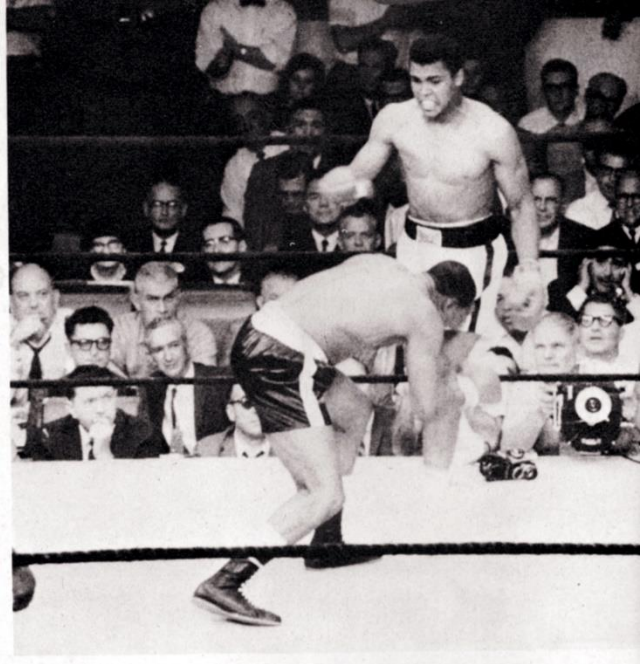
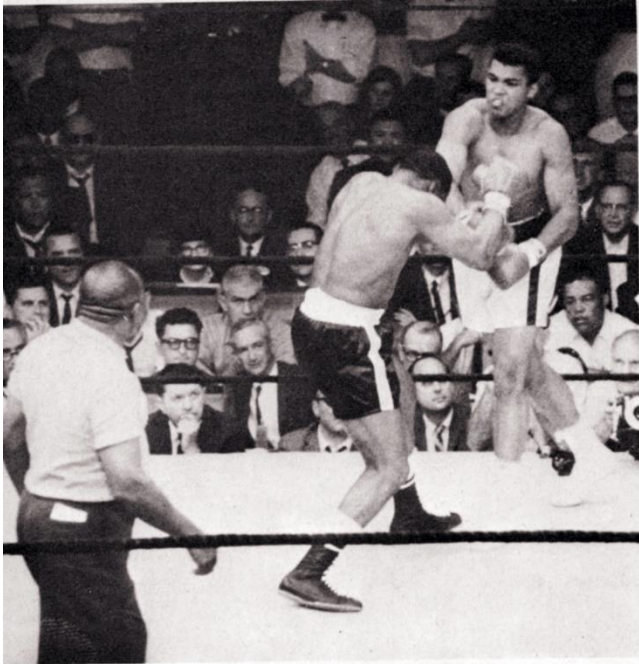
These photographs, excerpted from movies in the possession of Jimmy Jacobs, world's No. 1 collector of fight films, prove that Liston WAS hit, and hit hard enough to stop him.





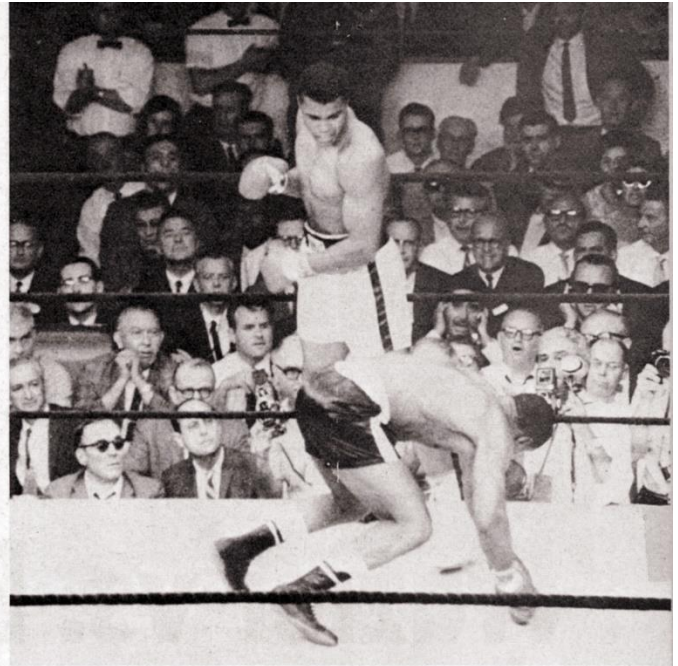
In the left upper we see Clay, now pivoted solidly on his left foot, landing on Sonny's head with a right which, at its inception, looked innocuous enough but which was to be one of the most controversial punches in the history of the heavyweight class. Note that Liston has been punched off balance. On the right, Liston's head has dropped. He has been hurt. Discussing that blow only recently, Liston said, "It was not a hard punch. I was off-balance. I was over-trained. I had run myself ragged mornings and had nothing left for my sparring." In the Marciano-Moore sequence below, note that Archie has spotted the Rock's mistake and as the champion completes his missed swing, his crafty opponent starts a looping right. Just before this, Marciano landed a hard left hook. The titleholder apparently rated this punch as being more painful and vital than it really was. In any event, he may have said to himself, "what a good boy am I!", and let himself drop momentarily into a careless phase. Did Marciano learn a lesson? Indeed he did. He took no more liberties with Moore. As for a lesson for the future, it was The Rock's last fight. On April 27, 1956, Marciano announced his retirement, emulating Gene Tunney. Neither pulled a Jeffries, with an ill-advised comeback. Once in a while Marciano encouraged a comeback report but he never entertained the idea seriously.



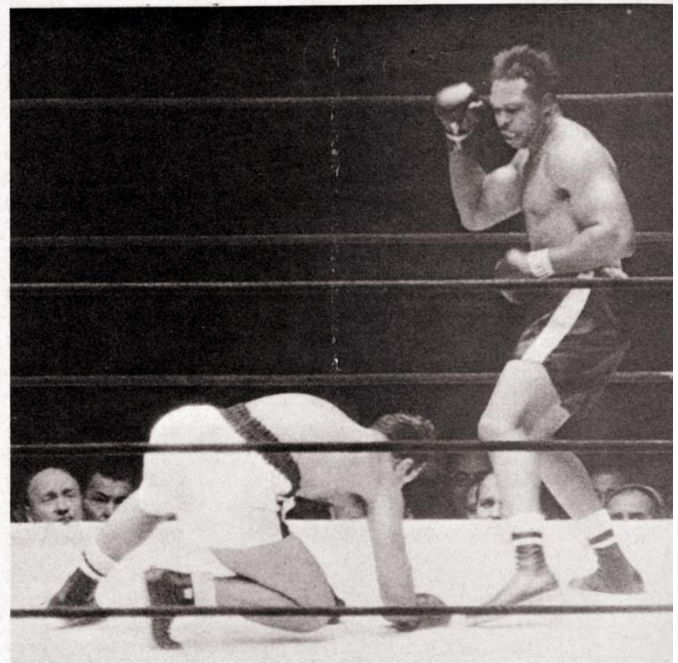


In the upper left, the frame from the movie shows at the slicing wallop to the head had a startling effect on Liston. Note that Clay has completed his swing and Charley appears to be defenseless. The picture on the right shows Liston on his way to the canvas. He has been hit. Let there be no doubt about that from now on. A startling feature of the two Clay shots is the apathy of the reporters in the background. Joe Louis' expression hasn't changed. The cameramen aren't jumping to their customarily vehement action. Below, the two shots of the Marciano-Moore dispute show that Archie has completed his slicing right. The Rock is bending over on his way to the canvas. Not showing is the pandemonium among the more than 60,000 spectators, who thought they were seeing one of the biggest upsets in boxing history. Marciano still insists, after 13 years, that he was in full possession of his faculties, and that the effect of the slicing punch was purely mechanical and not in any way connected with brain function and consciousness. The full impact of the decking blow did not hit the reporters for a few seconds. Like those at Lewiston, they could not believe that they were seeing a very serious phase of the fight. However, while not as serious as the decking of Liston a decade later, Marciano's flip quickly sent the reporters on the qui vive and had the telegraph wires tacking madly. A new heavyweight king in the making? No, it was not to be.





Now we come to the climactic features of the Clay and Moore achievements. In the upper left, Clay, with right hand poised, is ready to land again, and harder. Liston has dropped, with glove tips touching the floor. There still is no widespread emotion at the ringside. In the last shot we find Sonny still toppling. But there still is no action by referee Jersey Joe Walcott, who should have been right in the thick of it, ordering the champion to go to a neutral corner. Jersey Joe, poor guy, never did take over. The ensuing muddle, the knockout, the strange resumption of fighting, the ultimate cessation on the basis of the slicing right to the head, all are familiar to students of boxing. Sonny Liston definitely was knocked out, even if not as sliced up as Jess Willard was by Jack Dempsey, or as thoroughly knocked unconscious as Ingemar Johansson was in the second fight with Floyd Patterson. In the two lower frames, we see Marciano on his way down to the canvas in that dramatic second round in 1955, and then down on his right knee, with support from his right arm. Referee Harry Kessler is somewhere in the offing. Moore was decked four times, twice in a roaring sixth round. But in the nine heats Kessler had nothing like the anguish which was packed into the riotous one round for Walcott at Lewiston. Yes, Liston was knocked out there just as emphatically as Moore was stopped at the Stadium.



The Ring, July 1968