

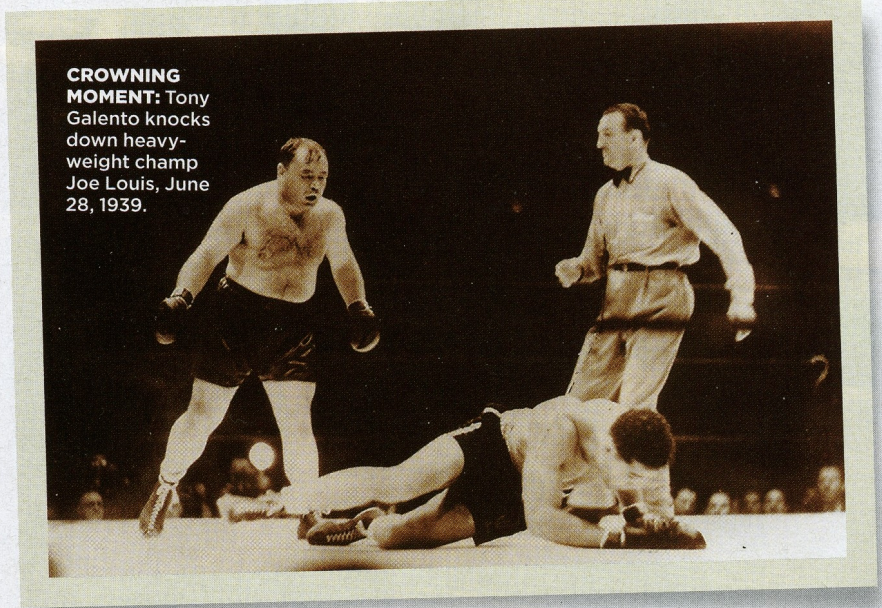
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CROWNING MOMENT: Tony Galento knocks down heavy-weight champ Joe Louis, June 28, 1939.

[SPORTS] BY F. DANIEL SOMRACK

Two-Ton Tony's Two Seconds of Glory

HE WAS A SHORT, CHUBBY, BEER-swilling prizefighter from Orange. His name was Tony Galento, and 75 years ago this month he came within seconds of dethroning Joe Louis, one of the greatest heavyweight champions in history. Before the historic clash, the brash Galento—aka Two-Ton Tony—threatened to “moida da bum.” But it didn’t turn out that way.

Training on beer and cigars, the 230-plus pound Galento was given little chance of upsetting the seemingly invincible Louis. But this was the Great Depression, and Galento, a 6-to-1 underdog, gave his fans something to believe in.

The June 28, 1939, main event drew 50,000 roaring spectators to Yankee Stadium. Though staggered in the opening minutes of the slugfest, Louis dominated the early rounds. In the third, a desperate Galento threw the

big left hook that had lifted him from the streets of Orange to national fame. The punch landed square on the champion’s chin.

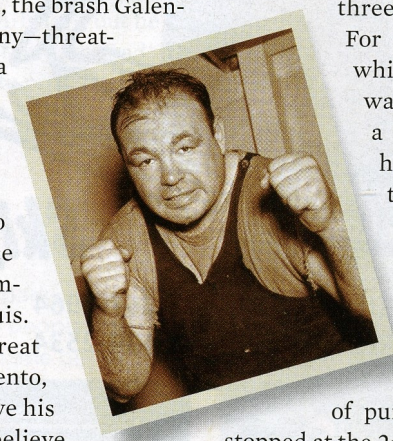
Louis stumbled to the canvas, but sprang back to his feet at the count of three to finish the round.

For two brief seconds, while the muscular Louis was on hands and knees, a buffoonish, over-the-hill pugilist was poised to become the heavyweight champion.

The undaunted Louis charged out in the fourth and bloodied Galento’s face with a barrage

of punches. The fight was stopped at the 2:29 mark.

Galento retired from boxing in 1944 and later tried his hand at acting, appearing alongside Marlon Brando in *Guys and Dolls* and *On the Waterfront*. Galento also owned and operated the Nut Club, a saloon in Orange. He died in 1979 at the age of 69. ■



PHOTOS: COURTESY OF F. DANIEL SOMRACK