

Boxing's Big Mac

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Long before Mark McGwire was launching tape measure home runs in Oakland and acquiring the nickname "Big Mac", West Coast sports fans used to cheer the feats of another "Big Mac". MacArthur Foster a heavyweight boxer from Fresno, California won his first 24 professional bouts all by knockout. Six came in the first round, four in the second round and seven in the third round. By the spring of 1970 he was the number one rated contender for Joe Frazier's crown.

Mac turned pro in November of 1966 and by the end of 1967 he had racked up nine kayos. Among his victims were veterans Floyd Joyner and Roy "Cookie" Wallace. He piled up seven more kayos in 1968 and in 1969 he made some serious noise in the heavyweight ratings. With Muhammad Ali banned from boxing, Joe Frazier and Jimmy Ellis shared the heavyweight crown. The division needed some new blood and much felt Foster was the answer. Mac added six more knockouts in 1969 stopping Roger Rischer, Thad Spencer, Roger Russell, Cleveland Williams (twice) and Bob Felstein. Although Williams was well past his prime he could still punch and Mac took all he had to offer and come back to win both times.

After stopping Jack O'Halloran in one round on April 9th, 1970 for his 24th straight kayo victory, Mac decided to come east to New York. In his Madison Square Garden debut was to take on veteran contender Jerry Quarry. A victory over Quarry would no doubt ensure a big money fight with Frazier. On June 17th as Jerry Quarry was to do several times during his exciting career, he upset the odds stopping a tentative Foster in six rounds. Quarry outboxed his less experienced foe until lowering the boom in the sixth. Mac showed none of his storied power. Quarry used the Foster victory as a springboard to match with the comeback Muhammad Ali. Three months later Mac returned to stop shopworn ex-contender Zora Folley in one round. Mac rolled off three more victories and then signed to meet Muhammad Ali. Ali had lost to Joe Frazier in the March 8, 1971 "Battle of the Century". Now Ali was taking on all new comers proclaiming himself to be the "People's Champion". Mac met Ali on April 1st, 1972 in Tokyo, Japan. Although Mac went the fifteen round distance, Ali won by a very comfortable margin. Mac looked slow and ponderous and did not the power of a fighter with a record of 28-1, all 28 wins by knockout coming into this contest.

The loss to Ali was probably the highlight of Mac's career. He would score knockouts over journeymen Sam McGill and Charley Williams. Then he was out-hustled over ten rounds by Bob Stallings. Mac closed out 1973 dropping a ten round duke in England to Joe Bugner. Foster had one fight in 1974 being outscored by slick Henry Clark. Mac took 1975 off and had his last bout in 1976 losing a ten rounder to Stan Ward.

Although overrated at the beginning of his career Mac proved to be a competent fighter. He finished with a 30-6 record, all wins coming by knockout and he was only stopped once, Mac's biggest claim to fame may have been in a late 1960's sparring session when he reportedly flattened Charles "Sonny" Liston!