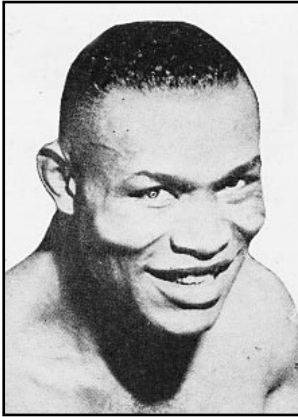


# WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

*A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.*

## 'Tiger Jack' Fox



**L**ong before world bantamweight champion Charles "Bud" Taylor decided to retire in early 1932 to focus on management and promotion, top Midwestern boxers relocated to Terre Haute to receive his tutelage.

The best of Taylor's many prospects was John Linwood Fox, a 180-pound Indianapolis native who earned the nickname "Tiger Jack" in the amateur and semi-pro ranks. Boxing records claim Fox was born April 2, 1907, but some suspect he was a few years older. He made his professional debut on Jan. 12, 1932, in Terre Haute under Taylor's guidance, polishing off George Dixon with a third-round KO. During his first year as a pro, he was 17-1-1 with 11 knockouts. His only loss

was a decision to light heavyweight champ "Slapsie-Maxie" Rosenbloom — a nine-year veteran — in a non-title bout at Dayton Oct. 17. Rosenbloom refused to award Tiger Jack a rematch. The popular Fox was declared the undisputed 1932 "Indiana Colored Heavyweight Champion" and was referred to as a "Terre Haute fighter" for the rest of his career.

Tiger Jack eventually gained revenge against Rosenbloom — a popular entertainer after his retirement from the ring — on Oct. 1, 1935, after Maxie lost the title to Bob Olin. By that time, Fox was spending much time in the western states, fighting biweekly and meeting most every challenge. Olin did not fight Fox until Jan. 15, 1937, after losing the crown to John Henry Lewis; Tiger Jack flattened him in the second round. Though he had defeated Fox in a 1937 non-title bout, Lewis also rejected Fox's bid for a title fight. The New York Athletic Commission (NYAC) forced Lewis to abdicate his throne for refusing to meet contenders and accepting a heavyweight bout with Joe Louis. Fox clearly was the top challenger with 31 victories in 32 decisions after March 4, 1936, including knockouts of future heavyweight champion Jersey Joe Walcott and middleweight champion Lou Brouillard. Melio Bettina and Al Gainer were ranked behind him. Fox defeated Gainer Nov. 22, 1938, earning the right to meet Bettina for the vacated title in Madison Square Garden. As fate would have it, Bettina scored a nine-round knockout. Regrettably, it was Tiger Jack's only title bout.

Always hoping for another title bout, Fox refused to retire even after taking a "three-year sabbatical" during World War II. Residing in Spokane, Wash., he continued to challenge the best. On June 13, 1947, he lured Joe Louis to Spokane for a four-round exhibition. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, he fought in Canada, Alaska and the Yukon Territory. A stroke in 1952 finally forced him to the sidelines. He died in 1959. Boxing experts Bert Sugar and Hubert Goldman assert Fox deserves to be ranked high among the 20th century's greatest fighters even though he never owned a title. Goldman believes Tiger Jack engaged in more major pro fights than anyone in history.

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