Ingemar Johansson

Contributed by Rob Snell
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Name: Ingemar Johansson
Career Record: click
Alias: Ingo
Nationality: Swedish
Birthplace: Gothenburg, Sweden
Hometown: Gothenburg, Sweden
Born: 1932-09-22
Stance: Orthodox
Height: 6' 0?
Reach: 72?
Division: Heavyweight
Trainers: Nils Blomberg, Whitey Bimstein, Al Silvani
Manager: Edwin Ahlquist In 1959 Ingemar Johansson became the first european since Primo Carnera to hold the world heavyweight title and he simultaneously placed swedish boxing on the map.

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His amateur career was blighted by a curious decision in the 1952 Olympic games in Helsinki. he reached the final in the heavyweight divison but was disqualified for not giving his best against the initimidating and tough Edward Sanders it was not untill 1982 that he was finally awarded his silver medal.
After the Olympics Johansson turned pro and under the guidance of his manager Eddie Ahlquist made steafy progress. He won the european heavyweight title in 1956 by knocking out the Italian Franco Cavicchi in thirteen rounds and made an impression on British fight fans a year later when he disposed of Henry Cooper in just five short rounds.
How ever his most impressive win to date was against American Eddie Machen who was at the time considerd to be number one contender for the world heavyweight title. Johansson beat him in one round this elevated him into his first world title shot.

Johansseon faced the world champion Floyd Patterson on june 26 1959 in the rowdy atmosphere of the yanke stadium in New York. Prior to the fight Johansson and his manger played up the Swedes playboy image and were careful to conceal his devastating right hand punch from the press at his traning sessions.
When the day of the fight arrived Patterson was the hot favourite but Johansson unleashed his secret weapon and floored Patterson seven times in just 3 rounds before it was stopped. Europe had its first Champion in the than 25 years.
In the return fight a year later Patterson was fully aware of Johansson's righthand. Patterson knocked Johansson out in five rounds to become the first heavy weight to regain his title.
A 3rd fight with Patterson in 1961 patterson got the better of johansson again with a 6th round knockout. On june 17 1962 Johansson regained his European title which he relinquished on becoming the world champion by knocking Dick Richardson in eight rounds. However he was later sripped of the title for failing to defend it so in 1963 he want on another quest to become world champion what at the time was held by none other than Sonny Liston.
As a stepping stone to the title he fought Brian London and beat London on points but only just as he was floored by a flurry of hurtfull punches in the last round and would of lost by ko if it were not for the bell. Deciding that the fight with London was to close he new it was time to retire.

Johanssons 3 fights with Patterson will always put him in the history books and should be seen as a fighter who took all his fights seiously. he relied heavly on a righthand punch which could ko nearly any one they never new what hit them and ended upn on there backs on the canvas.

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Ingemar Johansson won the Heavyweight Silver Medal for Sweden at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki, Finland. In the final against Ed Sanders of the United States, he was disqualified after the second round by French referee Roger Vaisburg for "not giving of his best." Johansson was not actually awarded his medal until 30 years later.

Press coverage of the Floyd Patterson-Ingemar Johansson match of 1959 focused on Johansson's training methods primarily because Patterson, the defending champion and prohibitive favorite, was often uncomfortable around the press and provided little in the way of exciting copy. And his training methods, when compared to the conventional wisdom of the time, were unorthodox. Eschewing the notion that a fighter ought to be miserable while preparing for a match, Johansson set up shop in the open air of Grossingers resort hotel. While Patterson, who trained in a barn, spent his evenings playing cards with his sparring partners, Ingemar could occasionally be seen at local night spots dancing the night away with his "secretary," Birgit. But the press erred when hey characterized Johansson as less than a serious professional. They hadn't taken into account his impressive victories over Joe Erskine, Henry Cooper, and Joe Bygraves. And they hadn't taken into account his victory over number one ranked Eddie Machen. It was this match, held on September 14th, 1959, that showed what Johansson could really do.

Machen arrived in Sweden expecting easy money and some low-risk prep work for a shot at Patterson's title early the following year. He received neither. Early in the first round Johansson landed with a straight right, a punch he affectionately referred to as "Toonder and Lightning." Machen went down as if shot. He managed to beat the referee's count, but Johansson scored with "Toonder" a few more times and Machen took the full count his with his head resting on the ring apron. The victory should have won him instant acclaim, but it didn't. The location of the fight - Johansson's back yard - coupled with the bias typically shown against European boxers, caused the public to regard his victory as a fluke.

Another factor contributing to Johansson's slight reputation can be traced back to the 1952 Olympics at Helsinki. Matched in the semi-finals against the huge American, Ed Sanders, Johansson kept his distance and rarely threw a punch, prompting the referee to disqualify him for not trying. Denied the Silver Medal, Johansson was branded a coward in Sweden. Years later, in his autobiography Seconds Out of the Ring, Johansson wrote that it had all been a big mistake, that the referee hadn't understood his battle plan, which, according to Johansson, called for a strict defensive strategy over two rounds, and a surprise attack in the third. In light of future events, he may have been right. In any case, his performance at Helsinki seriously damaged his credibility. On the eve of his first fight with Patterson, Johansson was a five to one underdog.

The fight, held in New York's Yankee Stadium on June 27, 1959, began as expected, with Patterson the aggressor and Johansson on defense. Through the first two rounds Johansson was content to move around the ring and throw soft left jabs that annoyed Patterson more than anything else. The right hand that destroyed Machen was nowhere in sight. By the third round, Patterson, according to his memoirs, was convinced that Johansson's fabled right hand, his "Toonder," didn't exist, that it was just a myth manufactured by the press.

Patterson's downfall began with a simple shift in strategy. In the first two rounds the Champion avoided Johansson's jab by bobbing under it, but by the third, a complacent Patterson started picking off the jab with his right glove. About a minute into the round Johansson turned the jab into a wide left hook and Patterson moved his right glove out of position as Johansson hoped he would. Johansson then drove his own right hand straight down the middle, catching Patterson flush. The Champion crashed to the canvas. Glassy eyed, he staggered up at the count of nine, out on his feet. Referee Ruby Goldstein should have stopped it right there, but instead, wiped off Patterson's gloves and waved Johansson in. Trapped in a deep fog, Patterson turned his back on the charging Johansson and walked to the neutral corner believing that he had scored the knockdown. Johansson indicated to Patterson that this was not so by slamming a hook into the back of his head, dropping him a second time. Five more knockdowns followed before Ruby Goldstein stopped the fight, making Ingemar Johansson the first European since Primo Carnera to win the Heavyweight Championship the World.

He was a popular champion. Unlike the moody, introspective Patterson, Johansson enjoyed the limelight. He appeared on television, made a movie, and even cut a hit record in Sweden. Many critics believed that the charismatic Swede was the best thing to happen to boxing in years. While the victor cavorted in public, the vanquished lived in a self-imposed exile. Criticized in the past for a lack of killer instinct, Patterson became a man consumed by hate, a hate that served him well in the rematch staged at the Polo Grounds.

Many predicted a rerun of their first fight, including Johansson. He was fond of telling anyone who would listen that the next time he hit Patterson with old "Toonder" the referee might as well count to a thousand. And history was on his side as well. Never had a heavyweight champion regained the title after losing it, though many had tried.

Unfortunately for Johansson, a different Patterson showed up on the night of June 20, 1960. Fighting with an intensity missing in the first match, Patterson negated Johansson's counter punching with tremendous pressure. Johansson's

"Toonder" found the mark only once, in the second round, but Patterson took it well and Johansson couldn't follow up. When in close, Patterson worked the body furiously, and when on the outside he fired a hard left jab that had the dual effect of hurting Johansson and keeping his big right hand from exploding. Early in the fifth, Johansson was dropped to the canvas for the first time in his career. He made it up at the count of nine, but he was in bad shape. Patterson attacked in a frenzy; punches poured in from every angle. During the attack, Johansson lost his equilibrium and found himself turned around, vulnerable to the same back-of-the-head blow that he struck Patterson with a year earlier. Patterson passed on the cheap shot and whirled him around with his right hand and threw his trademark punch, a leaping left hook. It was a direct hit. Johansson crashed to the floor in much the same way Patterson had when hit by "Toonder" a year earlier. But unlike Patterson, Johansson didn't get up. Many at ringside feared for his life as blood trickled out of the left corner of his mouth and his right foot twitched in a manner that suggested brain damage. Floyd Patterson became the first man in history to regain the heavyweight title.

Johansson recovered from the beating and engaged Patterson in a third fight on March 13th, 1961, in Miami Beach, something promised to him by the new champion while unconscious on the floor. Around this time Johansson unwittingly became part of the early Muhammad Ali legend while training in Miami at the Fifth Street Gym. It came about when Johansson showed up for a sparring session and there was no one to spar with, except Ali, then known as Cassius Clay. Though nineteen and only four pro fights to his credit, young Clay treated Johansson as if he were the sparring partner. He jabbed, he danced, he made him miss. He taunted him throughout. He told him he was a no-talent bum, told him he ought to be fighting Patterson instead. Johansson tried to shut him up but it was no use. He never even came close. After two rounds Johansson's handlers called it off.

He had better luck connecting against Patterson, and for a brief moment it seemed Johansson would become the second man to regain the heavyweight championship. Twice in the first round Johansson found the mark with his right hand and twice Patterson went down. That Johansson believed he was repeating his performance of 1959 was evident by the broad smile on his face while waiting in the neutral corner following the second knockdown. But his moment of glory passed when Patterson scored a knockdown of his own near the close of the round, one of the wildest in heavyweight history. Both had their moments in rounds two through five, but in the sixth, weary from Patterson's ceaseless body attack, Johansson went down and out from a Patterson hook, thus ending the three bout series.

Johansson returned to Europe where he continued his career with knockout wins over Joe Bygraves, Wim Snoek, and Dick Richardson. Talk of a challenge to Sonny Liston, who had relieved Floyd Patterson of the championship in the fall of 1962, began circulating.

On April 21st, 1963, Johansson took on Brian London in a bout scheduled for twelve rounds. Near the close of the last round, London, who ranked in the top ten but was held in low esteem, flattened the former champ with a right hand. The bell rang at the count of four, saving Johansson from a knockout. The referee and sole judge of the fight awarded the decision to Johansson, a decision greeted with jeers and catcalls. Johansson had gotten lucky and he knew it. He never fought again.

In 1970, Johansson made international news when he starting training in a local Swedish gym. Photos of the former champion showed him with a beer belly. One of his sparring partners, an amateur Swedish heavyweight, said that Ingo still had power in his punch. Johansson's rumored return made the pages of the The Ring Magazine, International Boxing, Boxing Illustrated, and just about every newspaper in the free world. However, whatever Johansson was planning never amounted to a ring return. The simple fact remained, that at 37 years old, he no longer had the drive and desire to get back into fighting shape.

The highlight of Johansson's post boxing career happened in 1982 when the International Olympic Committee forgave him for his tepid performance at the Helsinki Olympics, and presented him with the Silver Medal. For Johansson, it was a special moment. In that same year, Johansson took a break from his many business activities and entered the New York City Marathon along with his old nemeses, Floyd Patterson. Though severely overweight, he managed to finish the race. But, as in two of their three championship fights, he finished well behind Patterson.

Inducted into the World Boxing Hall of Fame in 1988. Inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame June 2002.

Amateur Record (By Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet/Johansson´s autobiography Sekonderna Seconds out of the Ring (Stanley Paul, 1960))

1948 (Feb. 17 - Dec. 30) Uno Jacobsson (SW) Göteborg, Sweden W KO 1 Helge Olausson (SW) Göteborg, Sweden W PTS 3 Hans Fredriksson (SW) Göteborg, Sweden W TKO 3 Stig Johansson (SW) Götebotg, Sweden W KO 1 Carl Nilsson (SW) Malmö, Sweden L PTS 3 Gert Schyllert (SW) Göteborg, Sweden W PTS 3 Lars Varg (SW) Göteborg, Sweden W PTS 3 Einar Dragsten (SW) Stockholm, Sweden L PTS 3 (Swedish Junior championships) 1949 (Jan. 23 - Dec. 11) Lars Johansson (SW) Jönköping, Sweden W PTS 3 Bengt Åkerman (SW) Borås, Sweden W KO 1 Sven Nordin (SW) Göteborg, Sweden W PTS 3 Olle Bergström (SW) Göteborg, Sweden W PTS 3 Bror Andersson (SW) Halmstad, Sweden L PTS 3 Rolf Thorsrud (NO) Trollhättan, Sweden W TKO 3 Hugo Nyström (SW) Eskilstuna, Sweden W PTS 3 Bert Bergkvist (SW)

Nyköping, Sweden W KO 2 Filip Karlsson (SW) Skövde, Sweden W TKO 2 Gert Schyllert (SW) Helsingborg, Sweden W PTS 3 Karl Frank (DK) Göteborg, Sweden W KO 3 Lasse Mörling (SW) Kalmar, Sweden W KO 2

1950 (Jan. 2 - Dec. 30) Folke Sjöberg (SW) Stockholm, Sweden W KO 1 (Swedish Junior championships) Lars Varg (SW) Stockholm, Sweden W KO 3 (Swedish Junior championships/Final) Arne Holm (SW) Göteborg, Sweden W KO 3 Leo Sörensen (DK) Helsingborg, Sweden W KO 2 Knut Hwidsten (NO) Västerås, Sweden W TKO 2 (Sweden vs Norway Junior International) Villy Hansen (DK) Lund, Sweden W KO 1 Ludvig Larsen (DK) Göteborg, Sweden W TKO 2 Arne Holm (SW) Stockholm, Sweden W PTS 3 (Swedish championships) Bengt Modigh (SW) Stockholm, Sweden W PTS 3 (Swedish championships/Final) Stig Frisk (SW) Värnamo, Sweden W PTS 3 Bengt Modigh (SW) Stockholm, Sweden L PTS 3 John Bjørnflatne (NO) Göteborg, Sweden W KO 2 Aldo Pellegrini (IT) Milano, Italy W PTS 3 (Italy vs Sweden International) Aldo Pellegrini (IT) Roma, Italy W PTS 3 (Italy vs Sweden International Laurent Touzard (FR) Göteborg, Sweden W PTS 3 Leo Kroon (SW) Linköping, Sweden W PTS 3 Henrik Boström (FN) Stockholm, Sweden W KO 1 Olle Axelsson (SW) Lund, Sweden W KO 3 Bjarne Olsen (NO) Göteborg, Sweden W PTS 3 (Sweden vs Norway International) Lars Johansson (SW) Jönköping, Sweden W KO 2 Herluf Hansen (DK) København, Denmark W PTS 3 (Denmark vs Sweden International) Olle Axelsson (SW) Kinna, Sweden W TKO 2 Leo Kroon (SW) Helsingborg, Sweden W TKO 3 Uwe Jansen (GE) Hamburg, Germany L PTS 3 Horst Herold (GE) Wolfsburg, Germany W PTS 3

1951 /Jan. 12 - Oct. 10) Peter Toch (UK) Göteborg, Sweden W PTS 3 Ilkka Koski (FN) Helsingfors, Finland W PTS 3 Aljgirdas Schotsikas (USSR) Götebeorg, Sweden L PTS 3 Uwe Jansen (GE) Göteborg, Sweden W PTS 3 Uwe Jansen (GE) Kinna, Sweden W TKO 2 Thörner Åhsman (SW) Stockholm, Sweden W PTS 3 (Swedish Championships) Bror Sandgren (SW) Stockholm, Sweden W PTS 3 (Swedish Championships/Final) Tommy Skovgaard (DK) Stockholm, Sweden W PTS 3 (Sweden vs Denmark International) Ernest Fann (US) Chicago, IL, USA W KO 3 Norvel Lee (US) Göteborg, Sweden L PTS 3 Tommy Skovaard (DK) København, Denmark W PTS 3 Bjarne Lingaas (NO) Oslo, Norway L PTS 3 (Norway vs Sweden International) Thörner Åhsman (SW) Göteborg, Sweden W KO 1 Laurent Touzard (FR) Paris, France W PTS 3 Aldo Pellegrini (IT) Göteborg, Sweden W PTS 3 (Sweden vs Italy International)

1952 (Feb. 29 - Aug. 2) Owe Wahlfeldt (SW) Stockholm, Sweden W KO 1 (Swedish Championships) Gerhard Lindblom (SW) Stockholm, Sweden W TKO 2 (Swedish Championships) Gert Schyllert (SW) Stockholm, Sweden W KO 1 (Swedish Championships/Final) Carl Frank (DK) Stockholm, Sweden W KO 1 (Sweden vs Denmark International) Laurent Touzard (FR) Stockholm, Sweden W KO 1 (Sweden vs France International) Tomo Krizmanic (JU) Stockholm, Sweden L PTS 3 Walter Kuhnert (GE) Stockholm, Sweden W KO 2 Horymir Netuka (CZ) Helsinki, Finland W PTS 3 (Olympic Games) Tomo Krizmanic (JU) Helsinki, Finland W PTS 3 (Olympic Games) Ilkka Koski (FI) Helsinki, Finland W PTS 3 (Olympic semi-final) Ed Sanders (US) Helsinki, Finland L DQ 3 (Olympic final)

Total; 71 - Won 61 (31 KO/TKO) Lost 10 (9 PTS, 1 DQ Palais 17.12.02/RSbg Miscellaneous
- Named Ring Magazine Fighter of the Year for 1958 and 1959.
- Appeared as a guest on an early 1959 episode of the American television series "What's My Line?" Panelist Martin Gable, although blind-folded, quickly guessed Johansson's professional boxing occupation.
- Web site of the Swedish Broadcast Corporation: (film of Johansson vs Hein ten Hoff, and vs Uber Bacilieri, etc.)