

Crossing The Color Line

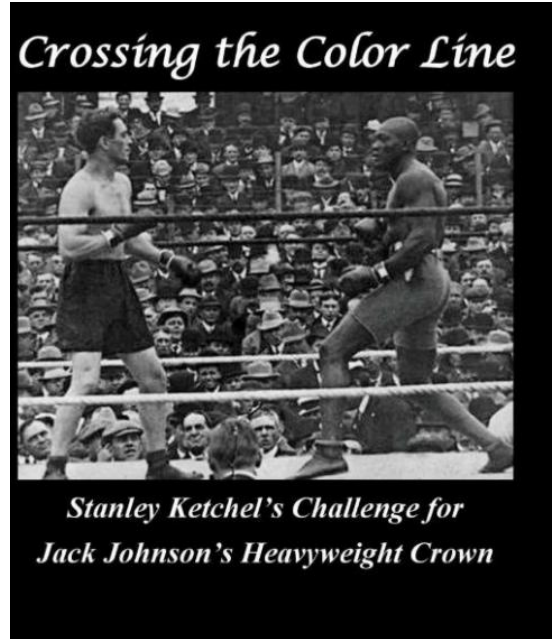
Stanley Ketchel's Challenge for Jack Johnson's Heavyweight Crown

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by Vernon Gravely (Author)

Description

On November 26, 1908, Stanley Ketchel made pugilistic history when he stopped Billy Papke to become the first two-time middleweight champion. Exactly one month later, Jack Johnson also made history when he beat Tommy Burns to become the first black man to wear the heavyweight crown. Immediately following Johnson's victory, the sporting world began clamoring for someone to win the title back for the white race. Most people turned to Jim Jeffries, the former champion who had retired undefeated in 1905. However, Willis Britt, who had guided his younger brother Jimmy to two lightweight title shots and took Battling Nelson to the top of the lightweight ladder, had another idea: What if the world's first two-time middleweight champ fought the world's first black heavyweight champ? All Britt had to do was steal Ketchel away from his manager, line up a series of fights that would have the sporting public take him seriously as a heavyweight contender, then chase Johnson until he agreed to a fight.

Impossible? Most sports aficionados thought so. After all, no ordinary manager would be able to pull off such a feat. But, Willis Britt was not an ordinary manager.



Biography

Vernon Gravely is a freelance writer and documentary filmmaker based in southwest Illinois. He has worked as a nursing assistant, vitamin store clerk, security guard (that lasted one night), dishwasher, corn detasseler, movie theater usher, movie theater janitor, writing tutor, English instructor, ESL instructor, holistic test scorer, and several other things that he either can't recall or refuses to divulge due to traumatic experiences associated with the various positions. His interests include film and television (as well as the history of those mediums), boxing, music (especially from the '50s and '60s), unsolved mysteries, and World War One aerial warfare. His fiction writing is relegated to screenplays that don't sell and his nonfiction writing centers on film, television and boxing history and little-known players in those areas.

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