

The Kray Twins and Joe Louis

by Maurice Elvyn Oakes

In 1966, I was working as a Detective Sergeant in the Cheshire Constabulary, attached to the N° 1 Regional Crime Squad based at Longsight, Manchester. There were about 250 clubs in Manchester at that time. I worked with a Detective Constable and a part of our evening duties was to visit nine designated night clubs

In the winter of 1966, the London gangsters, Ronnie and Reggie Kray, known as the Kray Twins, decided to set in motion a plan to take over the Manchester club scene. They had their men beat up Benny, the doorman at the Portland Lodge Club (one of mine). They indicated that this is what would happen if all the clubs in Manchester did not pay protection money. To give some semblance of legality, they made the excuse that they would bring Joe Louis, "The Brown Bomber" boxing legend, to each club to bring in the punters. I never believed that Joe Louis was aware of or party to the scam

My bosses were not very happy when they heard of the plan. They quickly called a meeting of all the club owners at the Grand Hotel in the centre of Manchester and told them that the Regional Crime Squad would run the Krays out of town (just like the good guys in a western film). When the Twins arrived in Manchester with their entourage and Joe Louis, they were informed that there was no deal and to leave town. Next morning, our entire staff of over 30 officers were present at Piccadilly Railway Station, London Road, Manchester. The Krays obviously saw no profit in staying and left on the London train. To my knowledge, they never tried to come back up north

When the train pulled out of the station, my two Detective Constables, Ron Aston and Ken Brierley (both standing 6' 5"), and I were left talking to my hero, Joe Louis. He had finished boxing but even at 52 years of age, he was a very impressive man. He was 6' 2", with a head and upper body like a bison - tapering down to his waist. This was apparent even though he was wearing an immaculate overcoat

He was quite articulate and I remember being thrilled at meeting and talking to the man who had been the boxing hero of both my father, my two older brothers and myself. Joe Louis was the first African American to play golf and paved the way for Tiger Woods and others who followed. He died in 1981 and Max Schmelling, the giant German boxer whom Joe beat, paid towards his funeral

Many years later, I read a book on the Krays and this event was described fully - BUT - the misguided writer stated that it all happened in LEEDS. You can't win



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