

Davis, Lenwood G. with the assistance of Marsha L. Moore. *Joe Louis: A Bibliography of Articles, Books, Pamphlets, Records, and Archival Material*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983. Pp. 232. Appendices, index. \$29.95 (cloth)

The past fifteen years has witnessed growing scholarly and general interest in the life and career of heavyweight prizefighter Joe Louis. Beginning in 1968 with Alexander Young, Jr.'s pioneering dissertation, "Joe Louis, Symbol: 1933-1949" (University of Maryland), major works on Louis include Barney Nagler's popular *Brown Bomber: The Pilgrimage of Joe Louis* (World, 1972); my own *Joe Louis* (Eerdmans, 1973); Gerald Astor ". . . And A Credit to His Race" (Dutton, 1975); and Louis's updated autobiography, *Joe Louis: My Life* (HBJ, 1978).

Now, Lenwood G. Davis, an Associate Professor of History at Winston-Salem State University and prodigious bibliographer, has provided a capstone to this interest with his fine bibliographical guide.

Clearly, any bibliography is intended as a research aid to further study of a topic. As such, it can be judged on the basis of four criteria: 1) Is it inclusive? 2) Is it carefully and usefully organized? 3) Does it have a substantial and methodologically helpful introduction? 4) Is it at least minimally annotated? In meeting two of these four standards, Davis has succeeded admirably.

There is virtually nothing missing here (save for my own little article on the second Louis-Schmelling bout (*Journal of Popular Culture*, Summer 1973)). Davis has obviously exhausted newspaper, periodical, monographic, and archival material to cover almost all printed matter related to the Brown Bomber's life and career. He even includes a state-by-state run down of obituaries!

Moreover, the work is skillfully organized with the researcher in mind. Davis moves from works by Louis to books and pamphlets about him, to newspaper and periodical articles. A helpful set of appendices includes, among other citations, archival and dissertation/thesis references, a list of reviews of Louis's own books, and his ring record and earnings. As might be expected, the majority of this work is devoted to newspaper and periodical articles. Here the organization is quite imaginative, combining chronological and thematic approaches. (There are a few glitches in the index; for example, Sandy Young's name is omitted although a reference to his dissertation does appear in the body.)

Unfortunately, Davis does not devote much effort to his introduction. Two and a half pages does little justice to Louis or to this bibliography. A more detailed analysis would have been especially helpful for neophyte undergraduate researchers.

For much the same reason, a complete lack of annotation weakens the book. Obviously, even brief descriptions for all 2800 entries would have forced the folks at Greenwood to float a bond issue to avoid financial ruin. But surely a brief annotation for the hundred or so major works, especially books, could have been provided. At the very least, Davis could have included an analytical bibliographical essay as part of an expanded introduction.

These shortcomings aside, this work will be of immense value to Louis researchers, both veteran scholars and undergraduate rookies. We now have a place to begin.

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