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The Mike Tyson Story: Sound Familiar?

Historical accounts of the sport of boxing consistently emphasize patterns and themes that construct the African-American athlete in a particular way. As we near the year 2000, images of contemporary black boxers can be read as a reflection of the life and times of some of those who went before them.

Mike Tyson is a good case in point. Tyson rose to the top at a very young age, but the glory and fast life caught up to him, much as it has done to many black athletes in society: Michael Irvin, Barn Morris, Dwight Gooden, Daryl Strawberry, for example. Tyson fell victim to a loss to a less talented tighter. a bad marriage. misplaced priorities, and a pattern of aggressive sexual behavior. While only Tyson and the woman alone with him the night of the rape incident know the details of it, the outcome was that Tyson's life took a turn that landed him in prison. Jack Johnson seems to still be alive in spirit, embodied in Mike Tyson and his troubled career.

Tyson is again a free man. He has turned to a new religion, developed a new focus and outlook on life, and now inspires the hope that a black boxer can remain in the spotlight and out of the darkness.