



FLOYD PATTERSON

TALKS TO TEENS

By FLOYD PATTERSON
World Heavyweight Champion

If you have been following the sports pages recently, you know that the New York State Athletic Commission has refused to grant Sonny Liston a license to fight in New York.

I was disappointed in the decision for several reasons. The most important reason is that the Commission didn't say exactly why it had denied Liston a license to fight in New York. The second reason is that, in my opinion, the decision against him only helps to kick Liston back into the gutter.

I've read newspaper accounts of Liston's prison record and his other run-ins with the law. I'm not going to try to defend his record but I am trying to understand it. I'm no social worker but I do know that when a man doesn't have much, he uses what he has. According to what I've read, Sonny never had much of an education or a family. What Sonny Liston did have was a big body and big hands and he has needed them both most of his life.

The newspapers have tried to make me the good guy and Sonny Liston the crook. Well, I just don't think it is fair. Either we are both good guys or we are both crooks. Because, if I hadn't been lucky, maybe I too would have had more serious brushes with the law. I just know that if you are willing to look deep enough into people, somewhere you will find a decent human being. If I don't believe this, I wouldn't want to fight Liston for the heavyweight championship of the world.

To me boxing is a sport, a tough sport, a rugged sport, but a sport. You train hard to get your body into the best physical shape possible. From that point on, it is a test of one man against the other.

Boxing has given me everything I own today. I don't want to see it corrupted any more than I would want to see baseball or football corrupted. I know there are people who don't like boxing, but I also know that any sport which can produce champions like Joe Louis and Rocky Marciano can't be too bad.

It seems not too many people like Sonny Liston. As for me, unless I am convinced that Liston is still connected with people who mean boxing no good, I will fight him for the heavyweight championship as soon as a site is agreed upon, probably in September.