

## **Handball used to be the cross-training sport of choice for world famous boxers...**

*By Paul Fitzpatrick*

Countless boxing stars have tried out handball as part of their training, as any player who has visited the New York Athletic Club, where the walls are lined with photos of champs such as Rocky Marciano and Jack Dempsey playing handball, will know.

New footage has recently surfaced of fight legend Harry Greb playing handball, also (here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNE6V\\_RyBwg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNE6V_RyBwg)). And, in possibly the most famous handball publicity shot of all, Mike Tyson played the game in Las Vegas back in the 1980s.

Steve Lott, a personal friend of Tyson's who worked for Tyson's manager (and handball legend) Jim Jacobs, related the story a couple of years back of how Tyson, preparing to fight Tony Tucker in July, 1987, tried handball.

"It was a bit of fun, a PR shot for Handball Magazine. There was a club there called the Sporting House. I said to Mike, 'I'd like to shoot some shots of you and Jim, just tossing the ball up in front of each other, just for Handball Magazine. He said 'Great, let's go'.

"So I brought them down, they put on the handball shirts and the gloves and threw the ball up a few times for two minutes, and, click click click, I took some photos.



“They were smiling and I said, ‘Okay, let’s go’. It was two weeks before the fight, I didn’t want Mike playing handball, just posing for a photo. So when I took the shots I started to walk off the court and Mike looked at Jim and said ‘hit it up’. Jim looked at me and turned to Mike and said ‘the fight is in...’ but Mike says [insistent] ‘hit it up!’

“So Jim says ‘Just one, Mike’. I walked to the front of the court and I knew this was my chance to get the one shot. So Jim hit a soft overhand serve and as Mike backed up and hit it, click, I took that shot! Mike hit the ball back, we asked him was his hand okay, he said ‘yep’, and we walked off the court. I knew it my one chance to get that shot, and I got it, it was sensational...”

While Tyson wasn’t a handball player, he was familiar with the sport and, as anyone who has seen the famous photo knows, had the form down.

So, there you have it. You learn something new every day...