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Cinderella Man

The Extraordinary True Story
Of James J. Braddock

Michael DeLisa

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Subject of a major motion picture called *Cinderella Man*, starring Russell Crowe and Renee Zellweger. Released June 10, 2005.

In 1934, Jim Braddock was a down and out journeyman boxer whose once promising career as a light heavyweight was cruelly cut short by injuries to his hands. The New Yorker of English parentage had lost most of his previous twenty-one bouts and been forced to quit. The Depression was beginning its darkest years and when work dried up on the docks, Braddock was forced to take a string of dead end jobs and claim welfare to feed his young family.

Then came a visit from his old manager, asking if he wanted one more fight. Desperate for money, Braddock had no choice. With the terrible injuries to his hands and a significant weight difference between himself and his opponents, he was expected to lose heavily.

But against all the odds and to everybody's amazement, Braddock won. He went on to beat the toughest opponents of his career and four wins later, he was the heavyweight champion of the world, in the greatest comeback in the sport's history.

Braddock's rags-to-riches success led Damon Runyon to call him 'the Cinderella Man.' His story captivated the nation in the same way the story of the racehorse Seabiscuit would a few years later. Braddock came to represent the struggle for survival facing many families in mid-thirties America and he became a symbol of hope for the disenfranchised.

Braddock would lose his title to the great Joe Louis but his place as the People's Champion was cemented forever.

About the author: Michael DeLisa is historical consultant on the forthcoming motion picture, *Cinderella Man*, directed by Ron Howard. He is editor of Cyberboxing zone, the definitive boxing website, and is co-author of one previous book on the sport. He works as an attorney in New York City.

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