Riggs, Bobby (1918-1995) Encyclopedia Article

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In 1939 Bobby Riggs was the number one-ranked tennis player in the world. He is remembered, however, not as much for his skills as for his ill-fated 1973 "Battle of the Sexes" match with Billie Jean King at the Houston Astrodome, in which the 55-year-old Riggs was easily beaten by King in front of a national television audience. Riggs claimed he could beat any woman player despite his age. In fact, Riggs had already beaten the top-ranked women's player, Margaret Court, so King knew she could not avoid playing him. Riggs's loss did wonders for women's sports, not just tennis. King thought that her victory was more symbolic and psychological than athletic, and she hoped it would provide a springboard for women's athletics, which it ultimately did. The timing of her victory was also important; Title IX, which banned gender discrimination in education, had just passed.

Further Reading:

"Robert Lorimore Riggs, American Tennis Champion and Braggart Male Chauvinist Died on October 27, aged 77." *The Economist.* November 4, 1995, 113.

King, Billie Jean. "My Favorite Chauvinist." *Sports Illustrated.* November 6, 1995, 118.

——. "The Battle of the Sexes." *Newsweek.* September 21, 1998, 90.