

WEIGHT DIVISIONS

Prior to Barry Hugman's research, there has never been a definitive list of weights by timescale. Here is a summary of Barry's research.

At the start of gloved fighting although certain named weight classes were already recognised, such as bantam, feather, light, middle and heavy, men in Britain generally claimed what was then known as the English title at every two pounds within those loosely defined weight bands. The welters (1887) were the next to arrive followed by light heavies (1899) and flys (1909), prior to junior light (1921), junior welter (1923), junior middle (1962), junior fly (1975), junior feather (1976), cruiser (1979), junior bantam (1980), super middle (1984) and minimum fly (1987) becoming established at later dates.

Because there were many variations in the weight limits between Britain and America in the early days, I have gone with what was generally perceived by those running the sport in Britain at the start of boxing - bantam (116lbs), Feather (126lbs), Light (140lbs), middle (166lbs) and heavy (166lbs+). The middleweight limit of 166lbs includes those fighting at catchweights who were too small for heavyweights. With the advent of new weight classes and in certain cases where great fighters moved up in weight and were seen by the press to have taken their named title with them, as in the case of Young Corbett at featherweight, I have massaged the weight divisions accordingly until we enter the modern era.

In hastening the demise of the every two-pounds English championships, on 11 February 1909 the National Sporting Club (NSC) in London stipulated that there should be eight named weight classes governing British boxing - fly (112lbs), Bantam (118lbs), feather (126lbs), Light 135lbs), welter (147lbs), middle (160lbs), light heavy (175lbs) and heavy (175lbs+). With fights held in Britain, the British Empire and Europe, I have gone with those weights from that date. For the same period, and falling in line with those running boxing in America, I have taken the American weight classes to be 116lbs for bantams, 122lbs for feathers, 133lbs for lights, 142/145lbs for welters and 158lbs for middles. By 1920 all the weight class limits had been standardized and are reflected as such within the listings.

Heavyweight

166lbs + (1877 to 18 August 1899)

170lbs + (On 29 August 1899, Joe Choynski beat Australian Jim Ryan on points to win the inaugural light heavyweight title, thus setting up a weight class for men between 160 and 170lbs)

175lbs + (Although the light heavyweight division had not really taken off, on 22 April 1903 a contest between Jack Root and Charles Kid McCoy further established the weight class, with the limit rising to 175lbs. Following the NSC formally introducing eight named weight divisions on 11 February 1909, with the light heavyweight division recognised in Britain for the first time - and shortly after in Europe – the minimum poundage became well and truly established)

190lbs + (On 8 December 1979, the new cruiserweight division got underway for men weighing between 175 and 190lbs, a contest between Marvin Camel and Mate Parlov deciding the championship. With heavyweights getting bigger all the time, this was implemented to allow the lighter men among the weight class more of a chance against men of similar weight)

195lbs + (At their end of their November Convention in 1981 the WBC increased the cruiserweight poundage to 195lbs)

190lbs + (In November 1988 the WBC dropped their cruiserweight limit from 195lbs to 190lbs, thus falling into line with the IBF and WBA)

200lbs + (Both the WBA and WBC increased the cruiserweight limit from 190lbs to 200lbs in early October 2003, followed by the WBO and IBF a short while later)

Cruiserweight

175lbs to 190lbs (8 December 1979 to 25 November 1981)

175lbs to 195lbs (At their end of November Convention in 1981 the WBC increased the poundage to 195lbs, while the WBA remained at 190lbs)

175lbs to 190lbs (In November 1988 the WBC dropped their weight-class limit from 195lbs to 190lbs, thus falling into line with the IBF and WBA)

175lbs to 200lbs (Both the WBA and WBC increased the weight limit from 190lbs in early October 2003 to allow small heavyweights an even chance when competing for a title, and were soon followed by the IBF and WBO)

Light Heavyweight

160lbs to 170lbs (29 August 1899 to 22 April 1903)

160lbs to 175lbs (With the weights for the 22 April 1903 Jack Root v Charles Kid McCoy fight set at 175lbs, the weight class would be contested at varying poundages within those limits until standardised. That came about on 11 February 1909 when the NSC formally introduced their eight named weight classes, with the middleweight limit staying at 160lbs and the new light heavyweight class set at 175lbs. However, it was not until 14 April 1914 that 175lbs settled down following Jack Dillon's win over Battling Levinsky)

168lbs to 175lbs (On 28 March 1984, the IBF launched the super middleweight division for all men between 160 and 168lbs)

Super Middleweight

160lbs to 168lbs

Middleweight

140lbs to 166lbs (7 January 1873 to 1 June 1887)

146lbs to 166lbs (This came about with the advent of the welterweight division in America and Johnny Reagan claiming the American title at 146lbs on 1 June 1887)

148lbs to 166lbs (146 to 148lbs was recognised as belonging to the welterweight division when Mysterious Billy Smith extended his claim on 24 January 1889)

148lbs to 160lbs (On 18 August 1899, Joe Choynski was matched against Australian Jim Ryan to decide the new light heavyweight title, covering men weighing between 160lbs and 170lbs)

150lbs to 160lbs (After Joe Walcott and Young Peter Jackson contested the welter title at 150lbs on 18 June 1903, the new British welterweight class also began operating up to that weight)

147lbs to 160lbs (On 11 February 1909, the NSC formally introduced their eight named weight classes, with the welterweight limit set at 147lbs and the middleweight class remaining at 160lbs)

154lbs to 160lbs (Reformed and renamed in August 1962, one of the first tasks of the WBA, formerly NBA, was to legislate for a junior middleweight class for fighters between 147 and 154lbs)

Junior Middleweight

147lbs to 154lbs

Welterweight

140lbs to 146lbs (1887 to 14 April 1898)

140lbs to 148lbs (On 14 April 1898, Mysterious Billy Smith extended his welterweight claim to take in 148lbs)

140lbs to 150lbs (After Joe Walcott and Young Peter Jackson contested the welter title at 150lbs on 18 June 1903, the new British welterweight class also began operating up to that weight)

135lbs to 147lbs (On 11 February 1909, in London, the NSC formally stipulated that the lightweight class limit would be 135lbs and that the new welterweight division would be set at 147lbs)

140lbs to 147lbs (On 15 November 1922, the NBA launched the junior welterweight class for men between 135lbs and 140lbs)

Junior Welterweight

135lbs to 140lbs

Lightweight

126lbs to 140lbs (27 November 1877 to 27 August 1895)

128lbs to 140lbs (On 27 August 1895, George Dixon extended his featherweight claim when beating Johnny Griffin at 128lbs)

130lbs to 140lbs (At the end of 1902, Young Corbett, the recognised featherweight champion in America who was increasing in weight, decided to defend the world title at weights up to 130lbs, receiving fair support in doing so)

126lbs to 140lbs (Following Young Corbett's defeat at the hands of Jimmy Britt on 25 March 1904, and with Britt remaining in the lightweight ranks, the featherweight limit reverted to 122lbs in America and 126lbs in Britain)

126lbs to 135lbs (On 11 February 1909, the NSC formally introduced eight named weight divisions, the featherweight limit being set at 126lbs and the lightweight limit not to be above 135lbs)

130lbs to 135lbs (On 18 November 1921, the NYSAC introduced the junior lightweight class set at 130lbs when Johnny Dundee beat George KO Chaney on this date to win the title)

Junior Lightweight

126lbs to 130lbs

Featherweight

116lbs to 126lbs (March 1886 to August 1888)

114lbs to 126lbs (With Cal McCarthy coming to the fore in America, by the end of August 1888 the 114/115lbs weight class was considered by many of those running boxing in America as belonging to the featherweights)

116lbs to 126lbs (By the end of 1891, 114/115lbs was once again seen as belonging to the bantamweight class by the majority of Americans)

116lbs to 128lbs (On 27 August 1895, George Dixon extended his featherweight claim to 128lbs)

116lbs to 130lbs (At the end of 1902, Young Corbett, the recognised featherweight champion in America who was increasing in weight, decided to defend the world title at weights up to 130lbs, receiving fair support in doing so)

118lbs to 130lbs (On 5 October 1903, the NSC recognised a bout between Joe Bowker and Bill King as involving the English bantamweight championship at 118lbs)

118lbs to 126lbs (Following Young Corbett's defeat at the hands of Jimmy Britt on 25 March 1904, 128 and 130lbs should not be seen as belonging to the featherweight class. On 11 February 1909, the NSC formally introduced the eight named weight classes, with the bantamweight class limit being 118lbs and the featherweight class limit set at 126lbs, thus ending English champions at every two pounds)

122lbs to 126lbs (On 3 April 1976, the World Boxing Council introduced the 122lbs weight class)

Junior Featherweight

118lbs to 122lbs

Bantamweight

All weights up to 116lbs (December 1877 to August 1888)

All weights up to 114lbs (With Cal McCarthy coming to the fore in America, at the end of August 1888 the 114/115lbs weight class was generally recognised by those running boxing in America as belonging to the featherweights. However, 105lbs was still seen by many in the country as being the limit, which caused much confusion for several years when trying to match the best men on either side of the Atlantic)

All weights up to 116lbs (By the end of 1891 114/115lbs was once again seen as belonging to the bantamweight class by the majority of Americans)

All weights up to 118lbs (With Joe Bowker meeting Bill King for the English 118lbs title on 5 October 1903, the boxing establishment in Britain recognised 118lbs as belonging to the former's bantam claim at that moment in time)

112lbs to 118lbs (At a meeting of the NSC on 11 February 1909 it was formally decided to introduce a new weight division below the bantams and recommended that the 112lbs limit would be set aside for 'flyweights'. It was also announced that the bantamweight limit would stand at 118lbs, despite the American bantam limit being generally seen as 116lbs at that time)

115lbs to 118lbs (On 2 February 1980, the WBC's newly-formed 115lbs weight class gained its first champion in Rafael Orono)

Junior Bantamweight

112lbs to 115lbs

Flyweight

112lbs limit (11 February 1909 to 4 April 1975)

108lbs to 112lbs (On 4 April 1975 the 108lbs junior flyweight division was introduced)

Junior Flyweight

108lbs limit (4 April 1975 to 14 June 1987)

105lbs to 108lbs (On 14 June 1987, the mini flyweight division was first contested by men below 105lbs)

Mini Flyweight

105lbs limit

Seven (7) of the divisions are also known by other titles, i.e. Minimum, Light Flyweight, Super Flyweight, Super Bantamweight, Super Featherweight, Super Lightweight, Super Welterweight.

Source: Barry Hugman

SUMMARY

Heavyweight	Roots date back to the 1720s.
Cruiserweight	In early October 2003 <i>From here on in all title bouts would be contested at 200 lbs</i>
Light Heavyweight	April 1, 1914 <i>From here on in all title bouts would be contested at 175 lbs</i>
Super Middleweight	March 28, 1984 <i>Division established at 168 lbs</i>
Middleweight	September 17, 1920 <i>From here on in all title bouts would be contested at 160 lbs</i>
Junior Middleweight	October 1962 <i>Division established at 154 lbs (**)</i>
Welterweight	September 17, 1920 <i>From here on in all title bouts would be contested at 147 lbs</i>
Junior Welterweight	November 15, 1922 <i>Division established at 140 lbs (*) (**)</i>
Lightweight	October 19, 1913 <i>From here on in all title bouts would be contested at 135 lbs</i> <i>This was the date that Willie Ritchie signed to meet Leach Cross at 135 lbs.</i>
Junior Lightweight	January 24, 1920 <i>Division established at 130 lbs (*) (**)</i>
Featherweight	September 17, 1920 <i>From here on in all title bouts would be contested at 126 lbs</i>
Junior Featherweight	September 1, 1920 <i>Division established at 122 lbs (*) (**)</i>
Bantamweight	July 19, 1919 <i>From here on in all title bouts would be contested at 118 lbs</i>
Junior Bantamweight	December 1979 <i>Division established at 115 lbs (**)</i>
Flyweight	February 11, 1909 <i>Established by the National Sporting Club (NSC) in Britain at 112 lbs</i>
Junior Flyweight	1975 <i>Division established at 108 lbs (**)</i>
Mini Flyweight	1987 <i>Division established at 105 lbs (**)</i>

(*) *Resurrected by various alphabet boxing organizations after being dormant for 30-40 years.*

()** *Also known by other titles, i.e. Minimum, Light Flyweight, Super Flyweight, Super Bantamweight, Super Featherweight, Super Lightweight, Super Welterweight.*