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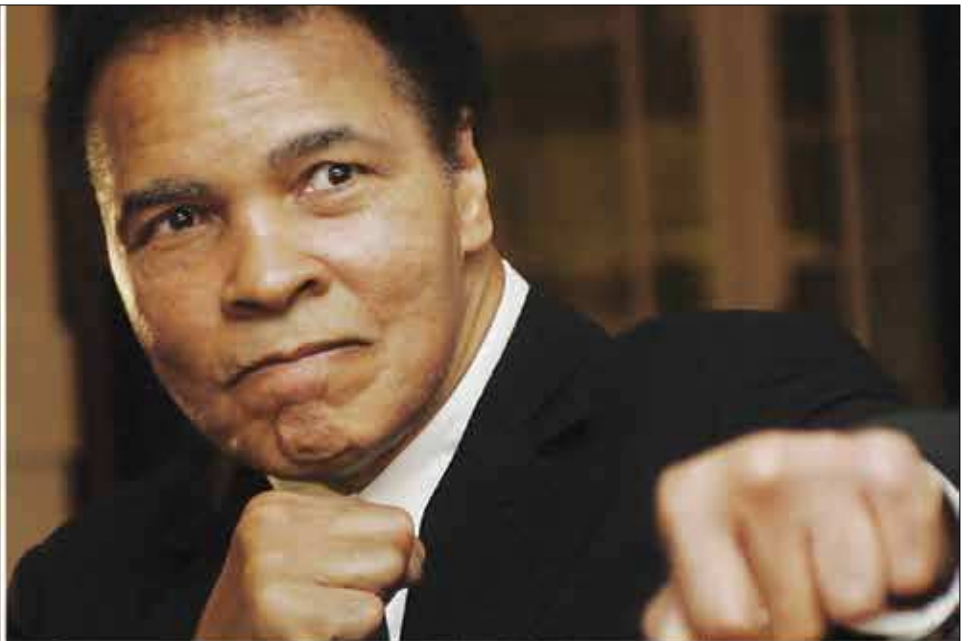
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Muhammad Ali, who riveted the world as 'The Greatest' boxer of all time, is pictured through the years from a 21-year-old world championship heavyweight contender to his status in retirement as a world ambassador.

Muhammad Ali

World to Gather for Final Farewell

(AP) -- A traditional Muslim funeral for "The Greatest" Muhammad Ali will be held in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky, on Thursday with an interfaith service to follow on Friday drawing political and religious leaders from around the world, according to memorial plans released by Ali's family on Monday.

Ali died Friday at age 74. Former President Bill Clinton, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and King Abdullah II of

Jordan are expected to speak at the Friday service. Representatives from a number of religions, including Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Judaism, Mormonism and Buddhism will also be present.

With a wit as sharp as the punches, Ali dominated sports for two decades before time and Parkinson's disease, triggered by thousands of blows to the head, ravaged his magnificent body, muted his majestic voice and ended his storied career in 1981.

He won and defended the heavyweight championship in epic fights in exotic locations, spoke loudly on behalf of blacks, and famously refused to be drafted into the Army during the Vietnam War because of his Muslim beliefs.

Despite his debilitating illness, he traveled the world to rapturous receptions even after his once-bellowing voice was quieted and he was left to communicate with a wink or a weak smile.

Revered by millions worldwide and reviled by millions more, Ali cut quite a fig-

ure, 6-foot-3 and 210 pounds in his prime. "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee," his cornermen exhorted, and he did just that in a way no heavyweight had ever fought before.

He fought in three different decades, finished with a record of 56-5 with 37 knockouts — 26 of those bouts promoted by Arum — and was the first man to win heavyweight titles three times.

He whipped the fearsome Sonny Liston

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