

Leon Spinks was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1953. He joined the Marine Corps as a Private in 1973. After boot camp, Leon was sent to Camp Johnson before being assigned to the All-Marine Boxing Team and was stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

Spinks would serve active duty from July 1973 to December 1976, being honorably discharged as a Corporal. At the 1974 World Games in Cuba, Spinks captured the bronze medal as a lightweight. He collected the silver medal the following year at the Pan-American Games, then won the light heavyweight gold medal at the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal, Canada.

Spinks made his professional debut on January 15, 1977 in Las Vegas, Nevada, knocking out Bob Smith in the fifth round. He was 6-0-1 and had boxed only 31 rounds professionally when he got the call to fight his boyhood idol, Muhammad Ali. Spinks would win the fight with a 15-round split decision on February 15, 1978, in what is considered by many as one of the biggest upsets in boxing history. That night he captured the WBA and WBC Titles. A rematch against Ali came on September 15, 1978. The fight would once again go 15 rounds but this time Ali won by unanimous decision. Spinks was inducted into the Nevada Boxing Hall of Fame in 2017.