Before I begin my tirade, let me say that I consider it a huge honor to be a voting member of the International Boxing Hall of Fame. Covering boxing, I have met many of the greats. I am not someone who gets star struck. Yet when I receive my ballot every year, the fourteen-year-old kid in me – the one that first became a boxing junkie – comes out. “I can’t believe that I help decide who gets into the Hall of Fame,” I think to myself.

I take the task seriously. I examine the record of every boxer that appears on the ballot. Many nominees are eliminated immediately. I try to research the remaining names as much as I can so that the fighters I select are truly deserving of the honor.

I’m not sure my fellow writers do the same. Either that or we have very different standards. The only other explanation is that the state of Ohio was in charge of the ballots.

Of all the different sports’ Halls of Fame, I have always admired baseball’s the most. It is the most difficult to get in. The crusty old baseball writers have mandated that a player must dominate his era in order to get in. Terrific ball players like Jim Rice, Andre Dawson, and Goose Gossage have sat forlornly by the phone, waiting for it to ring on announcement day, only to be disappointed.

And when it comes to crusty old writers, no sport can beat boxing. Heck, even most of boxing’s young writers are as cranky as an overtired three-year old. Yet somehow boxing writers have lowered their standards and routinely make two egregious errors in the way they vote for induction into the Hall of Fame.

Error #1 – Popularity seems to count more than dominance. It seems to me that voters often reward boxers that they enjoyed watching or feel never got their due. Hall of Famer Ken Norton was a well liked fighter who gave Muhammad Ali thirty-nine rounds of hell, yet never won a title bout. Granted, he would have been a champion if he had fought in another era, but against top quality opposition, he lost about as often as he won.

Or consider Max Baer. The heavyweight champ knocked out Primo Carnera, considered one of the worst heavyweight champs of all time, to win his title. In his first title defense, Baer was upset by Jim Braddock. Along the way, he dropped decisions to Tommy Loughran and Tommy Farr and was knocked out by Joe Louis and Lou Nova (twice). To me that’s like putting Jim Leyritz in Cooperstown because he hit a clutch homer in the World Series.

This year’s crop of inductees falls in the same category as a guy like Ken Norton. Bobby Chacon was a very good fighter. The only negative I can say about him is that he couldn’t beat the big names consistently. He defeated almost everyone else -- but to get my vote, you have to have some Ws over the cream of the crop in your era. If you never fight that upper echeon, then you need to completely dominate everyone else. Barry McGuigan held his title for just one year before being upset by Steve Cruz. Terry Norris almost got my vote. He was

a hell of a boxer, but kept losing to guys he should have beaten.

Again, I think the above mentioned boxers were all very good – Andre Dawson good – but not Ted Williams good.

The only boxer that I voted for who will be enshrined next June was Duilio Loi. He lost just three times in one hundred and twenty six professional bouts.

Error #2 – The IBHOF is clearly biased towards American and European fighters. Obviously, I'm not suggesting that David Duke is casting ballots. Since most of the writers who vote are from North America and Europe, it makes sense that they'll vote for the guys they see on a regular basis. It's tough to analyze an Asian fighter's credentials, for example, when he never ventures out of his region.

However, I believe these boxers deserve our attention and study as to whether they belong in the hallowed halls next to the Joe Louises and Fred Apostolis of the boxing world.

I voted for five other boxers besides Loi. Four were from Asia or Africa.

Yoko Gushiken never fought outside of Japan, yet held the WBA Featherweight title for five years, compiling a 23-1 record during his career.

Brian Mitchell never took on any all time greats, but he held his Super Featherweight title for five years and retired as champion. He lost just once in forty-nine bouts. That's dominance.

Masao Ohba fought only once outside of Japan (a 9th round KO win in San Antonio). He started boxing professionally two weeks after his fifteenth birthday. When he died in a car wreck at the age of twenty-three, he had been the WBA Flyweight champ for more than two years and finished with a record of 35-2-1.

Myung-Woo Yuh – What's a brother got to do to get into the Hall of Fame besides hold the WBA Jr. Fly title for six years, defend it seventeen times and then recapture it from the guy who beat you in the very next fight? Wuh's career ended in 1993 after he defended the reclaimed title one last time. He called it quits at 38-1.

I'm happy for Chacon, Norris, and McGuigan. If I attend the ceremonies this year, I'll be standing and applauding like everyone else. It will give me the warm fuzzies that these men who sacrificed so much will have their moment in the spotlight once again. Yet next year, I hope others will make sure that the boxers who are enshrined are truly all time greats.

JABS

To prove that I'm as cranky as anyone – several people have written on various websites that **Chacon**, **Norris**, **McGuigan**, and **Loi** were inducted into the Hall of Fame. No, they weren't. They were voted in. The boxers will be inducted in June.

No one seems to be talking about what I think is the best fight coming up in the next few weeks – **Kassim Ouma** vs. **Kofi Jantuah**. This is far from a gimme for Ouma's first defense. Jantuah has skills and can bang. Ouma is all action and always in his opponent's face. Don't be surprised if they steal the show from **Gatti** – **Leija**
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The word out of South Florida, where **Zab Judah** is training for his February 5th rematch with **Cory Spinks**, is that Super Zab is looking very very sharp. He is sparring only with southpaws. In one recent session he reportedly dominated and battered 15-2 Junior Middleweight
Said Ouali
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