

Fine Wine, Not Watered Down HOF Candidates

Written by Ed Maloney

Monday, 05 December 2005 19:00

I just returned from dropping my International Boxing Hall of Fame ballot off at the mailbox. And as is starting to become an annual ritual, as soon as the press conference ends in Canastota, NY, some grumpy, obnoxious scribe or blogger will whine that one or none of those who received enough votes are worthy of enshrinement and that the hall of fame is being watered down.

First of all, don't blame the Hall of Fame. Neither Brophy, nor any member of his staff have a vote. The responsibility falls on members of the Boxing Writers Association of America, other international boxing journalists and noteworthy historians. This contingent, which numbers over 100, is hardly the College of Cardinals.

If a voter doesn't take the time to review all 45 boxers in the "Modern" category he has failed in his responsibility as an elector. There's nothing the Hall of Fame can do. It's no different than any other sport. The electing process in the major sports halls of fame differ as much as the sports themselves. Every so often an athlete is enshrined that nobody admits to voting for.

Either way, take note of anyone who suggests that there were no great boxers on the ballot who deserve enshrinement. They don't know boxing, or, at the very least, lack the mental capacity that is required to make informed, intelligent decisions.

I proudly put checks next to (alphabetically): Jung-Koo Chang, Humberto Gonzalez, Yoko Gushiken, Pone Kingpetch, Ernesto Marcel, Lloyd Marshall, Brian Mitchell, Masao Ohba, Holman Williams and Myung-Woo Yuh. Only the top three vote getters will be enshrined.

Chang, who had a record of 38-4, was the WBC light flyweight champ from March 1983 to June 1988. The Korean Hawk made 15 successful defenses of the title in a reign that lasted 5 years and 3 months before retiring, as champion. The native of Pusan, South Korea, was unsuccessful in his comeback, but was 16-4 in world title fights.

Humberto "Chiquita" Gonzalez won and lost the WBC light flyweight title three times from June 1989 until he retired in July 1995. The southpaw brawler and crowd favorite made 12 successful defenses. All three of his fights with IBF champion Michael Carbajal were epics; and his last fight, a thrilling seventh-round knockout at the hands of Saman Sorjaturong, was voted Fight of the Year, by The Ring magazine. He had a 43-3 (31) record with all three losses coming in world title fights.

Yoko Gushiken made 13 successful defenses of the WBA light flyweight title during a reign that lasted from October 1976 to March 1981. He was undefeated until he lost the title in his last fight. He retired, 23-1 (15).

Pone Kingpetch was the world flyweight champion from April 1960 to October 1962. He had two additional reigns and title fights through April 1965. He was 6-3 in world title fights, including

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wins over Hall of Famers Pascual Perez (twice) and Fighting Harada (1-1).

Ernesto Marcel of Panama was the WBA featherweight champion from November 1971 through February 1974. I first saw him on film as a featherweight contender in a 1970 fight against another up-and-coming star named Roberto Duran. Although Marcel didn't beat his countryman, he did amass a 40-4-2 (23) record, including four defenses. He retired after retaining his title via unanimous decision, by a comfortable margin, against Alexis Arguello. What ever became of Arguello?

Brian Mitchell made 12 defenses of the WBA junior lightweight title from September 1986 to September 1991. Mitchell's career was severely hampered by the boycott against South African athletes due to that country's apartheid system. So title defenses on his native soil, let alone unification fights, were out of the question until the government reformed. He proved his mettle in 1991, scoring a unanimous decision and a draw in two tough matches against IBF champion Tony Lopez. Mitchell won the WBA title from Alfredo Layne, who dethroned Hall of Famer Wilfredo Gomez, and retired – as champion -- with a record of 45-1-3 (21), including 13-0-1 in world title fights.

Former WBA flyweight king Masao Ohba reigned less than two years in the early 1970s before he died in a car accident. But Ohba did make five defenses from April 1971 through January of 1973 and finished with a 35-2-1 (16) record, including a win over Betulio Gonzalez, who was a top flyweight throughout the decade and who reigned, several different times as the WBA or WBC champ.

Myung-Woo Yuh is a personal favorite. I took notice of the lad while I was on the ratings committee of KO magazine. He made 18 defenses of the WBA light flyweight title over two reigns from December 1985 through July 1993. He avenged his only defeat and retired as champion with a 39-1 (14) record, including 20-1 in world title fights.

You won't find an entry for Lloyd Marshall or Holman Williams in The Ring Record Book. However, you will find them on the ledgers of Hall of Famers and other champions of their era. The press, as well as boxing fans of the day, respected their accomplishments.

Marshall was a top middleweight and light heavyweight who fought from 1936-51. He owns wins over Hall of Famers Joey Maxim, Ezzard Charles, Charley Burley and Jake LaMotta.

Williams, whose career spanned 1932-48, was a top-rated middleweight during WWII. He didn't get a title shot because all titles were frozen during the war (and champ Tony Zale was in the Navy). Nevertheless, Williams fought and beat the top middleweights of his day. He was 1-1 against Moore; engaged in an epic seven-fight series with Burley (3-3, with 1 No Contest) and was 2-1 in three-bouts with Marshall.

With half as many weight divisions and only one champion per division, winning a world title was a significant achievement. So was beating future Hall of Fame talent.

It's a shame that only the top three vote recipients will be enshrined. The rest will have to hope

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for next year.

I can easily mount a more passionate defense of my selections. Yet, I also acknowledge that some folks may differ with some of my choices. But to suggest that none of these 10 men, or any of the other 35 eligible fighters in the “Modern” category is worthy of enshrinement is absurd.