

## R.I.P. Luis Spada: Guided Duran's Comeback

Written by David A. Avila  
Monday, 19 January 2009 19:00

---

With little acknowledgment Luis Spada died Saturday in his adopted country Panama.

If you don't recognize the name it's one of Spada's traits that he maintained throughout his life to remain behind the scene rather than in front.

Spada managed three great Panamanian champions in Hilario Zapata, Rosendo Alvarez and Roberto "Hands of Stone" Duran among others.

After Duran lost to Sugar Ray Leonard in the second fight, he also lost his manager Carlos Eleta. In came Spada.

"Spada managed him when nobody wanted to," said Tony Rivera, who worked the corner for Duran during that time at Spada's request. "Everybody gave up on Cholo."

The Argentine had once told Duran that if he ever needed anything to just call "even to carry the spit bucket in your corner" and was not forgotten by the great fighter, as Spada told Christian Giudice in his biography "Hands of Stone: The Life and Legend of Roberto Duran."

In September 1982, Duran called Spada.

"I told Spada, I don't want you to carry my bucket for me, I want you to be my manager," Duran told Giudice.

It was Spada who guided Duran through his resurgence that included wins over Pipino Cuevas and Davey Moore. The fiery Panamanian boxer now in the Boxing Hall of Fame fought until 2001.

Spada advised Duran that he would have to strip himself of vices and return to the hunger of before or quit boxing.

"I didn't want to waste my time and his time," Spada said in the book.

Rivera remembers well that merger.

"After Duran hit bottom he (Spada) turned him around and made him a world champion again," said Rivera who worked the corner for those Duran fights that also included the loss to Tommy "Hitman" Hearns.

Rivera, who also worked the corner for Alexis Arguello, Marco Antonio Barrera and Zapata, said Spada was always looking to promote his fighter in any way possible, including making Duran train in a tourist attraction.

## R.I.P. Luis Spada: Guided Duran's Comeback

Written by David A. Avila

Monday, 19 January 2009 19:00

---

"We were training to fight a mean dude in Hearn's and Duran was at Universal Studios every day instead of a gym," said Rivera who spent that period with Duran taking food away from him on a daily basis. "Duran had to lose 41 pounds in a month. He was weak. He nearly fainted walking through Caesars Palace the week of that fight."

Needless to say, Duran was knocked out by Hearn's and the partnership with Spada ended after another loss to Robbie Sims in 1986.

Rivera said it was Spada who brought him to work with Duran and also to work with the other Panamanian greats.

"I met Luis Spada through Carlos Eleta," says Rivera. "He got me to work with Hilario Zapata and he was the first guy to take me to Asia."

Spada had met Eleta in Los Angeles and became Eleta's matchmaker after helping make a fight between Argentina's Nicolino Locche and Peppermint Frazer for the world title. Later he helped Eleta co-promote fights and then eventually became a boxing manager.

But it was his support of Duran's resurgence that gave Spada his greatest feat though he rarely touted the association.

"Spada never got in our way. Nowadays managers want to get in the ring and get in the way," said Rivera. "But Spada was just a big presence. When he's behind you, you knew that you were in the winner's corner."

Pedro Avila R.I.P.

Rivera also said that Panama's famed trainer Pedro Avila died two days ago.

"He was Panama's best trainer," said Rivera. "He was the guy who made Zapata. He also had Antonio Esparragoza and made him champion."

May Spada and Avila rest in peace.