

HBO Looks At The Billy Collins/Panama Lewis Tragedy

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HBO SPORTS DOCUMENTARY ASSAULT IN THE RING REVISITS THE ILL-FATED 1983 WELTERWEIGHT FIGHT BETWEEN BILLY COLLINS JR. AND LUIS RESTO WHEN IT DEBUTS AUG. 1 ON HBO

NEW YORK, April 22, 2009 – HBO Sports will present ASSAULT IN THE RING, a documentary about the ill-fated bout between Billy Collins Jr. and Luis Resto and its subsequent effect on both boxers, it was announced today by Rick Bernstein, executive producer, HBO Sports. Debuting SATURDAY, AUG. 1 on HBO, the special will explore the events that profoundly impacted the New York sports landscape and the world of boxing, and changed the lives of two athletes.

“This film will revisit one of boxing’s saddest days,” said Bernstein. “But it’s a compelling story that we feel needs to be told, because so many lives were changed forever on that night at Madison Square Garden. This is an in-depth, comprehensive examination of that tragic event.”

“There were so many unanswered questions surrounding what really happened and who, if anybody, was responsible. What we discovered was much worse than had ever been imagined,” said director and producer Eric Drath. “However, what we ultimately found was a story that went far beyond fact-finding; what unfolded before our cameras is a story of redemption.”

ASSAULT IN THE RING revisits a boxing scandal considered one of the sport’s darkest hours, and traces a man’s despairing journey following his alleged involvement in a criminal plot. The documentary examines new evidence about this boxing match turned 30-minute assault, and reveals much more about the pre-fight activities of Luis Resto, his trainer Panama Lewis and the athletic commission representatives.

On June 16, 1983, undefeated welterweight Billy Collins Jr. set out to fulfill every boxer’s dream of fighting in the world’s most famous arena – Madison Square Garden. Collins’ opponent, Luis Resto of the Bronx, had his own dream of rising to the occasion in front of hometown fans. But what began as a match that Nashville native Collins was favored to win changed both athletes’ lives – ending Collins’ career dreams and landing Resto in prison.

Resto seemingly reached a fighter’s ultimate goal by upsetting Collins, but his post-fight victory celebration was short-lived when it was discovered that the padding had been illegally removed from Resto’s gloves by his trainer, Panama Lewis, before the fight. Resto was subsequently incarcerated and banned from the sport, while the brutally beaten Collins went into a tragic downward spiral.

Lewis, whose official career as a trainer came to an end that night, was also subsequently banned, and speaks for the first time in ASSAULT IN THE RING about the events of the fight and their impact. Others interviewed include: former New York State Athletic Commission

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chairman Jack Prenderville; members of the prosecution, defense and jury from the 1985 trial in New York; and Billy Jr.'s widow, Andrea.