

The Greatest Fighters Ever: Egregious Omissions/Inclusions, Part 2

Written by Frank Lotierzo
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Along with the inexcusable names that were missing and included among the greatest fighters ever list discussed in Part One, there are some other monumental mistakes and holes in the final ballot that I'll touch on in this final installment.

The list was supposed to include the 10 greatest fighters in each of boxing's original eight divisions with the heavyweight division having 12 different fighters to pick from as the greatest. In case you missed the original, here is the story that started the whole debate. www.thesweet-science.com/boxing-article/6938/greatest/

In Part One I went into detail as to what I believe were the most outlandish omissions and inclusions. Below are some quick thoughts and reasons why the list is hard for this writer to take seriously.

I welcome any debate by one and all of the panelists who believe I'm wrong. My e-mail is attached as always.

What is discussed below is just a quick overview and one could go into much more detail omitting and exchanging names. Some (Villa & Galaxy) have already been touched on by TSS and there's no need to repeat what's already been said.

Heavyweight: No Jim Jeffries?

Jim Jeffries (18-1-2) retired undefeated and didn't suffer his first defeat until coming out of a six year retirement, losing to reigning heavyweight champ Jack Johnson. Jeffries beat better opposition in James J. Corbett, Bob Fitzsimmons and Tom Sharkey than did John L. Sullivan who made the list. Jeffries fought at a measured pace but was willing to engage his opponent if pressured. He led with his left while fighting from a low-crouch and had seemingly endless stamina. He also scored the quickest knockout in lineal heavyweight title fight history taking just 55 seconds to stop Jack Finnegan. If the 12 greatest heavyweights in history are going to be named, Jeffries name must be on the list way before that of John L. Sullivan.

Light heavyweight: No Tommy Loughran?

Georges Carpentier (88-15-6) makes the list but Tommy Loughran (117-29-13) doesn't? Loughran won a 10 round decision over Carpentier in a light heavyweight bout the only time they fought. Although it may have been at a time when Carpentier was on the decline, there's no case for Carpentier over Loughran, who was a better overall fighter and beat better opposition than Carpentier. Loughran beat other greats and near greats like Mickey Walker, "Young" Stribling, Jimmy Slattery, Mike McTigue, King Levinsky and heavyweights Paulino Uzcudun, Arturo Godoy, Al Ettore and champions Max Baer, Jack Sharkey and James Braddock.

Loughran was a master boxer, and routinely made his opponent miss and then made him pay.

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He was a terrific counter-puncher, used every inch of the ring, was a great feint-er and mixed his punches to the head and body brilliantly, always keeping his opponent guessing. With the exception of not being a great puncher, Loughran could do everything in the ring. Tommy Loughran is considered by practically every respected boxing historian in the world as being among the ten greatest light heavyweight champions ever and most have him among the top six or seven. Georges Carpentier is seldom listed amongst them. It's one thing not to include Loughran, but to not include him and include Carpentier is out-right wrong.

Middleweight: Carmen Basilio is on but not Jake LaMotta or Dick Tiger?

Basilio belongs on the list among the greatest welterweights, not middleweights. Other than splitting two fights with Sugar Ray Robinson, most of Basilio's signature wins came while he was fighting at welterweight.

Jake LaMotta compiled a career record of 83-19-4. LaMotta was known for having a terrific chin, and like Jim Jeffries fought out of a low crouch. He applied a lot of pressure, brought the fight to his opponent and was exceptionally strong physically, despite not being a big puncher. He was best fighting on the inside and tried to force his opponents to fight and trade with him at close range. Jake is probably best known for handing undefeated welterweight great Sugar Ray Robinson his first defeat. In a career that lasted 13 years, LaMotta not only beat Robinson, he fought him six times, losing five of the six. Along with Robinson, he beat the likes of Marcel Cerdan for the middleweight championship, Fritzie Zivic, Holman Williams, Bob Satterfield, Tony Janiro, Laurent Dauthuille, Robert Villemain and Tiberio Mitri. LaMotta, due to his level of opposition and strength, more often than not makes the cut among the top ten greatest middleweights in history.

Dick Tiger was a physical beast and was only the second middleweight champ in history to defeat the reigning light heavyweight champion. He compiled a career record of 60-19-2 over a career that spanned 18 years. His best fighting weight ranged between 156-168 pounds. Tiger applied pressure but wasn't really a swarmer. He was more prone to fight in spurts and was probably at his best on the inside. Tiger really didn't possess a signature punch, but had power in both hands. The level of opposition he faced is first-tier. His career got off to a rough start due to mismanagement, but he scored wins over such fighters as former middleweight champ Terry Downes, Randy Sandy, Joey Giardello, Holly Mims, Florentino Fernandez, Henry Hank, Gene Fullmer, Hurricane Carter, Nino Benvenuti, Frankie DePaula, Andy Kendall and Jose Torres, twice. Tiger, like LaMotta clearly belong on the list among greatest middleweights before Basilio.

Welterweight: Aaron Pryor is on, but (Barbados) Joe Walcott and Kid Gavilan are not?

Joe "The Barbados Demon" Walcott (99-33-25) is considered one of the five greatest welterweights in history. Walcott was a short-in-stature fighter with long arms and dynamite in both hands and fought fighters between lightweight and heavyweight and even fought Sam Langford to a draw. Early in his career the original Joe Walcott scored a first round knockout over an opponent who weighed 180 pounds. Walcott was

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welterweight champ from 1901-04 and actually coined the phrase "the bigger they are, the harder they fall." He was considered a physical freak whose neck measured 18 inches and his chest expanded measured 41 inches, which is unheard of even today for a welterweight. Walcott's reputation as a puncher was so big that he said in the Police Gazette October 30, 1900 "since no welterweight or middleweight will fight me I'm compelled to go to the next weight class," and issued challenges to heavyweights Tom Sharkey, Gus Ruhlin and champion Jim Jeffries. Walcott has been ranked among the top five welterweights in many Ring Magazine polls, but failed to make the cut here.

Kid Gavilan (108-30-5) was never stopped once in 143 fights. Gavilan was a great boxer with fast hands and feet. He invented the "Bolo" punch and won the welterweight title shortly after Sugar Ray Robinson gave it up so Ray could challenge middleweight champ Jake LaMotta. Gavilan fought Robinson twice during Ray's peak and lost by close decision twice, once for the welterweight championship. Some referred to Gavilan as Robinson without the devastating power. During his career Gavilan beat former or future champions Ike Williams, Carmen Basilio, Beau Jack, Johnny Bratton, and lost a highly controversial decision to Johnny Saxton for the welterweight title. Gavilan also beat fighters above welterweight such as Rocky Castellani, Tony Janiro, Laurent Dauthuille, Eduardo Lause, Tiger Jones, Chuck Davey, Gasper Ortega, Chico Vejar and Ernie Durando. Gavilan is usually ranked among the top-10 greatest welterweights ever but missed the cut on the greatest fighter ever list.

Aaron Pryor (39-1) is without question one of the greatest fighters in history. That said, Pryor fought three (2-1) times as a welterweight and that was at the end of his career. Pryor is not in the conversation when it comes to naming the 10 greatest welterweight champions in history. As great as he was it's preposterous to include him at 147 because his body of work there doesn't exist.

Lightweight: Floyd Mayweather is on, but Aaron Pryor is not?

As mentioned earlier it seems the criteria for the greatest fighter ever is more about being popular than it is about being a great fighter. With Floyd Mayweather's 39-0 inclusion it has the feel as if the panel was trying to find a place for him. Mayweather has a terrific skill set, but he's not creative offensively and his punch variation is pretty vanilla. Yes, he's very good fundamentally and is hard to hit cleanly. Like Evander Holyfield was during his prime, he did nothing great but is outstanding at everything else. The difference being Holyfield moved up and fought better fighters and beat them. Mayweather's best wins at lightweight are over Diego Corrales and Jose Luis Castillo. Corrales was undefeated but he's not on anybody's list of great lightweights, and in this author's opinion, Mayweather had to fight Castillo twice just to beat him once in the ring. The record book says he's 2-0 versus Castillo, but in my opinion he lost the first fight and knew it until after the decision was announced.

Aaron Pryor (39-1) was a non-stop punching machine. Pryor threw punches from every angle and with legitimate knockout power in both hands. Pryor had incredible stamina and could take it to the head and body. For years he was avoided fighting as a lightweight. Finally after realizing he wasn't going to fight for the lightweight title, Pryor moved up and challenged

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defending champion Antonio Cervantes for the junior welterweight title in his 25th fight. Cervantes, who was only stopped once before fighting Pryor early in his career, was knocked out in the fourth round and lost the title to him. During Pryor's reign as junior welterweight champ he stopped the three division champ Alexis Arguello twice. In all Pryor made 10 successful defenses of the title, winning eight by stoppage. After taking a two year hiatus, Pryor came back fighting as a welterweight and lost for the only time in his career when he was stopped by Bobby Joe Young.

When ranking the 10 greatest lightweights of all-time, it's difficult to find a spot for Pryor because it's one of the deepest divisions and it is littered with great fighters, but he probably needs to be included.

On the other hand Mayweather only makes the list if you're either a huge fan of his, which should not come into play, or if you're trying to drum up interest in the voting. Pryor definitely over Mayweather at lightweight.

Featherweight: Jeff Fenech is on, but Johnny Dundee isn't?

Johnny Dundee (90-31-19) is best known for his speed of foot and ring movement and he was only stopped twice in 22 years fighting the best of the best. He was crafty and could punch from anywhere in the ring. Dundee was an exceptional counter-puncher and was also known for his toughness. During his time he beat the best featherweights of his time and a lot of lightweights. Dundee fought Benny Leonard, one of the greatest lightweights in history, nine times and he fought the murderous punching Lew Tindler three times. Nat Fleischer, the founder of Ring magazine, ranked Dundee among the top five greatest featherweight champions in history, and as recently as 2005 the International Boxing Research Organization ranked him fifth.

Jeff Fenech (29-3-1) was a crowd pleasing fighter who was aggressive and threw punches in bunches. However, he did his best work fighting as a bantamweight. He was outstanding but no way does his body of work and opposition faced at featherweight merit him being on any list making up the greatest featherweights in history.

Bantamweight: Orlando Canizales is on, but not Terry McGovern?

Terry McGovern (65-6-7) was a genuine life-taker as a puncher and was avoided by many fighters between bantamweight and lightweight during his era. McGovern was a swarmer with a stocky build and threw every punch trying to end the fight. McGovern held his hands high and used a lot of head and upper-body movement, making it hard for his opponents to catch him clean. He was a short armed puncher and known for his non-stop aggression. McGovern won the bantamweight title at the age of 19. McGovern would later capture the featherweight title from George Dixon, who held it for almost 10 years, making 23 successful title defenses. Prior to fighting McGovern, Dixon was never off his feet, however McGovern dropped him twice en-route to giving the older fighter a one-sided beating.

Orlando Canizales (50-5-1) was another modern fighter who fought all comers in his division. Canizales was an exceptional boxer puncher with more than adequate power in both hands. He

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is worthy of consideration on a list of great bantamweights, but not before a fighter like McGovern. To include Canizales and not McGovern shows a gap in knowledge or that the voting is based on popularity.

Flyweight: Vic Darchinyan is on, but Fidel LaBarba isn't?

Since Pancho Villa has been covered, I'll go to another glaring omission; Fidel LaBarba (70-15-6) is a fighter who should've made the cut among the top-10. At least above Vic Darchinyan. Although LaBarba wasn't a puncher, he was an aggressive boxer and his level of opposition like most fighters of the early 20th Century is unquestioned. He also ended Frankie Genaro's five year title reign; Genaro had ended Villa's reign as flyweight champ. The ballot would've been stronger with the inclusion of Villa and LaBarba.

Vic Darchinyan (32-1-1) is an incredibly strong guy. Darchinyan is a southpaw. He's very patient and methodical because, until Nonito Donaire knocked him out, he didn't believe anyone could hurt him. He holds his hands by his sides and just wings punches from any angle. He's very heavy handed, but not an unusually hard puncher. He's more concussive than sharp, but his punches add up. Darchinyan never gets tired, and the pressure never stops. He's got no subtlety whatsoever. But he's definitely a dangerous guy. Since being knocked out (although he'd never admit it), he's begun boxing more--holding his hands higher, blocking punches, and moving his head. His defense is still his offense, but (unlike most all aggressive fighters who get brutally knocked out) he's actually better and more dangerous now. Darchinyan is a good fighter in his own way, but to call him a "great" is an incredible over-reach.

Regarding the Greatest Fighter Ever Contest, my biggest issue and fault with it was a lot of the names that belonged among the 12/10 finalists were missing, and there were some names that made up the list that in my opinion no way belong. The debate as to who is "the" greatest in each division isn't etched in stone, however I think to narrow it down, you must have the correct names in the mix. I think the greatest fighter ever ballot should've been declared a popularity contest moreso than the greatest fighter ever.

As far as the greatest fighter ever in boxing history? That distinction can only go to one man, Sugar Ray Robinson aka Walker Smith Jr. In my opinion the debate begins with, Who is number two?

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