

Sugar Ray Robinson's Greatness Stands The Test Of Time

Written by Frank Lotierzo

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As most boxing fans have surely read by now the greatest fighter ever poll has concluded and Walker Smith Jr. — better known as Sugar Ray Robinson - was voted the greatest pound for pound fighter in boxing history. Robinson finishing at the top should've been a given by any boxing observer who knows what they're watching. But Manny Pacquiao and Muhammad Ali finishing second and third is utterly ridiculous and shows a real gap in knowledge by those who voted them into their respective slots.

Before touching on Robinson the fighter, it must be noted that I was underwhelmed by the panel's selection of fighters for inclusion in the poll. However, based on the overall voting by the fans, the panel looks like a five-headed boxing scholar compared to how the totals shook out regarding the fighters who won, placed and showed among the top three in the original eight weight divisions.

Mike Tyson the second greatest heavyweight in history? The same Mike Tyson who wanted no part of the 41 year old George Foreman who Evander Holyfield made the first defense of his undisputed heavyweight title against? How about Tyson being voted the second best heavyweight of the eighties which is the only all-time heavyweight poll where he has a solid lock on number two?

Roy Jones the greatest light heavyweight of all-time and Joe Calzaghe at number three? All I can say is if you really believe Jones is the greatest light heavyweight of all-time and Calzaghe is the third greatest, you've been wasting your time following the sweet science. Obviously you've never heard of Ezzard Charles, Michael Spinks and Bob Foster, three fighters that Jones and Calzaghe would have to pay their way into a gym just to watch them shadow box.

Oscar De La Hoya the third greatest welterweight in history? You know what that says? It says if you think that you must believe that boxing happened on another planet before it first aired on HBO/Showtime/ESPN. Oscar is a borderline great fighter at best. He might have made a great sparring partner for Emile Griffith, Luis Rodriguez, Carmen Basilio and Kid Gavilan, but he would've been a non-entity had he fought any of them or the level of opposition they faced throughout their careers.

Floyd Mayweather the third greatest lightweight in history? I guess Joe Gans, Benny Leonard, Tony Canzoneri, Ike Williams, Pernell Whitaker, Alexis Arguello, Shane Mosley, Carlos Ortiz, Packy McFarland, Barney Ross, Julio Cesar Chavez, Lou Ambers, Jack Blackburn and Battling Nelson couldn't have beaten Philip N'Dou or gone 1-1 versus Jose Luis Castillo?

Manny Pacquiao the greatest featherweight in history? Pacquiao wouldn't have been my choice, and would rank behind Pep, Saddler and Sanchez. However, with the way he's carried his power up in weight and based on the level of opposition he's fought, it's very plausible he could be considered amongst the top three.

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As far as the flyweights - other than Michael Carbajal finishing third, it's not that bad. I would've gone with Pancho Villa, Pascual Perez or Benny Lynch instead.

Back To Robinson

In all honesty Robinson being voted the greatest boxer/fighter of all time via an Internet Poll says a great deal about just how great the original "Sugar Ray" really was. When you consider that Robinson's prime was fighting as a welterweight circa 1943-48, it's remarkable that he won an Internet poll made up of mostly voters who probably never saw film of him fighting at his best, since it doesn't exist. But that's okay because if you've seen any clips of him fighting as a middleweight during the early fifties, it's easy to see that there's never been another fighter his equal regardless of the era or weight in which they fought.

No fighter has ever had the perfect career, and that includes Sugar Ray Robinson. That said Robinson was the most natural and pure fighter who has ever laced on a boxing glove. He is one of the top five punchers and boxers among the greatest of the greats who've fought at welterweight and middleweight. Robinson could fight as the aggressor, counter-puncher and if he needed to he could use his legs and box circles around the best of the best. Robby hated violence but inside the ring he had a mean streak a mile wide. The last guy in the world you'd want to have in front of you if you were in trouble was the Sugarman. He'd rip your head off as soon as he'd look at you.

Robinson could go anywhere he wanted in the ring. He could have his feet out of position and punch across his body and still land with knockout power. As a conventional fighter he could throw triple right-hooks in succession and score knockouts. And maybe the most over-looked facet of Robinson's career was his chin and toughness. Robinson was only stopped once in 200 fights. And that came against light heavyweight champ Joey Maxim when he physically collapsed after the 13th round of their title fight. Robinson only weighed 157 pounds and was spotting Maxim 16 pounds on a day in June that was so hot (104 degrees) that referee Rudy Goldstein had to be replaced by Ray Miller after the tenth round. Yet Robinson still had a commanding lead in the fight after 13 rounds. Had that fight taken place today Robinson wins a 12-round unanimous decision and the undisputed light heavyweight championship.

The only negative that can be said about Robinson is he was hittable. However, you must understand that in boxing in order to hurt or knock your opponent out, you have to be willing to put yourself in range to where he can hit you back. Robinson had no trepidation about doing that. Ray wanted to take his opponents' head off and willingly accepted that he might have to catch a few himself in the process, a trade-off he often made.

Sugar Ray Robinson is the greatest pound-for-pound fighter in boxing history. The fact is he could do it all. He could move and box better than Muhammad Ali, he was an equal to or better two handed puncher than Joe Louis and was every bit as mean and tough as Harry Greb. There's no other fighter in history that can be said about.

It's been 55 years since Sugar Ray Robinson beat Tommy Bell for the vacant welterweight title back in 1946. I doubt there's an active fighter today who those covering professional boxing in

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2064 will view the same as Sugar Ray Robinson is viewed by those following and covering boxing today.

The fact that Ray Robinson is held in such high regard by those who only know boxing via the Internet and cable TV says it all. The Greatest Ever poll is the dumbest boxing poll I've ever read, but at least they got it right when it came to the greatest pound-for-pound fighter in boxing history - Sugar Ray Robinson.

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