Written by Jim Amato
Friday, 09 March 2001 18:00

The Rubber City of Akron has probably never produced anything resilient then a boxer named Doyle Baird.

Rugged and balding, he was often compared to Carmen Basilio in looks and his swarming style. After a fine amateur career he turned professional in 1966 under the wing of Don Elbaum. After defeating Ted Wright two years later he had amassed a 23-2 record. On October 14, 1968, Doyle fought middleweight champion Nino Benvenuti in a non-title bout at the Akron Rubber Bowl. There may have never been a more dubious draw decision rendered. By almost all ringsider accounts, the champion had been beaten that night by tenacious Baird.

One year later Doyle outpointed Don Fullmer in Cleveland to show he was no fluke. Back in Cleveland three months later he was out boxed by Hall of Famer, Emile Griffith. On September 12, 1970, Doyle again met Benvenuti in a non-title bout at Bari, Italy. Nino stopped Doyle in the tenth round. It would be Nino's last victory. In 1971, Baird engaged in a thrilling three fight series with the tough Mike Pusateri winning two out of three. Moving out of the middleweight division, Doyle received a shot at the W. B. A. Light Heavyweight title.

On December 15, 1971, Baird challenged Vicente Rondon who proved to be too strong retaining his crown via an eighth round stoppage. A kayo loss to Jean Claude Bouttier in France in 1972 finished Doyle as a serious contender.

Since Doyle's retirement, he has been active in training amateur boxers in the Akron area. Although he considered Benvenuti a great boxer, Baird feels Griffith was a better all around fighter. Being a natural middleweight, Baird said he took the Rondon bout for the title shot and the money.

Doyle said he did not make much money during his career, but he would do it all over again. His love of boxing has helped many youngsters in the community.