So what does the term 'underrated' really mean? Does it mean that you don't get enough credit for how good you are? Or does it mean that you're really just under-exposed and not enough attention is paid to you? Or is it a combination of both?

It really is the latter, it means that not only do you get enough plaudits and accolades for your skills, it also means that you're largely ignored.

But that's if you're truly worth of being labeled as such. I mean, how many times have we see things be given the 'underrated' tag so much, that they in effect, really become 'overrated' Like for instance when you get a pizza and those around you will say how the crust is the best part. Hogwash, if the crust was that good, you'd get extra crust on your pizza, not cheese or pepperoni's. But you hear about the crust so often it's become gospel. Seriously, when was the last time you had an all-crust pizza?

It's the same in boxing, a smaller fighter wins multiple titles in two or three weight divisions- oftentimes against the worst titlist available and they get the 'underrated' tag put on them. Meanwhile, upon closer inspection they've fought absolutely nobody and were guided to their titles.

When you say the 'U' word in this sport, it has to go to guys that are battle-tested, skilled and largely ignored or not given enough credit for what they've accomplished. Y'know, they're underrated.

And this term doesn't just go to champions who are not marquee names, but guys who are journeyman, contenders, pound-for-pound types and fighters of all shapes and sizes. Here are five that truly fit the description.

- Orlando Salido- Jr. Lightweight: Salido is a guy with a mediocre mark, 18-8-1, but upon closer inspection you find that this was the classic case of a young eager Mexican who simply didn't get the proper guidance early on in his career.

He turned pro at the age of 16 and would lose seven of his first 15 bouts. But since that point he has gone 10-1-1 over his last dozen with wins over former world champion Reggie Tuur, Lamont Pearson, Carlos Gerena, Jorge Monzon, Radford Beasley and his one loss was a highly controversial

loss to another former world champion Alejandro Gonzalez.

In what is becoming a deep 130-pound division, Salido is becoming a dangerous contender. Salido is maturing rapidly(he's just 22 as we speak) and he possesses a big right hand that's capable of starching anybody. Just ask his last foe, Freddy Neal, who came in with a record of 17-1-2, who got iced with a single right hand.

For Salido, it's not how he starts but how he finishes.

- Manuel Medina- Featherweight: 'Mantecas' has been written off more times than chalk and after he got blown out in seven rounds by Juan Manuel Marquez this past February, everyone figured the end was near for Medina. In July he was brought in to be sacrificial big name lamb for WBO featherweight king Scott Harrison in his home country of Scotland. Well, guess what? Medina pulled the improbable by winning a belt for the fifth time in out-punching his younger and stronger opponent.

And y'know what, even with his record of 63-13, he's a Hall-of-Famer. Yeah, you heard that right, in the old days that meant you were battle tested and took on eveeverybodyhich is exactly what Medina has done.

Just look at his ledger: Johnny Tapia(in a highly disputed 12 round loss), Frank Toledo(TKO6 for the IBF belt), Paul Ingle(L12), Hector Lizzaraga(W12), Derrick Gainer(KO'd 9), Luisito Espinoza(LTD 8), Naseem Hamed(KO'd 11), Victor Polo(WTD 9), Alejandro Gonzalez(W 12), Tom Johnson(fought three times to a win and two close defeats), John-John Molina(L12), Troy Dorsey(W12 for his first title, the IBF featherweight crown).

Now, he lost his share of fights but outside of 'Smoke' Gainer and Marquez, he gave everyone- and I do mean everyone- a tussle. Can you name me another fighter today that has encompassed as much in one weight division as he has? From Reagan's second presidential term to George W. this guy has been in the thick of things at 126 pounds.

- Manuel Gomez- Welterweight- Ok, here's a guy, like the above mentioned Salido that I label a 'Mexican Pendleton', you all remember Freddie Pendleton, right. He was this tough-as-nails Philly fighter in the late 80's, early 90's that was basically a .500 fighter up until his 45 pro bout and then suddenly became this world-class guy that gave everyone hell and even won a world championship. Well, Gomez is a 'Mexican Pendleton' with his 23-10 mark, no it's not a record that says anything more than journeyman but look closer and you see a surging fighter who's a world

class 147-pounder.

Like a Salido, he had a slow start to his professional career losing seven of his first 17 bouts and he was just another tough guy that was brought in to provide rounds and an eventual win to bigger name fighters. In November of 1997, he would go 11 surprisingly tough rounds with Shane Mosley for his IBF lightweight crown and despite the loss it was beginning of renaissance for 'Rana'.

In his last eight fights he has notched seven wins- most notably against undefeated prospect Kofi Jantuah, who came in at 21-0 and former two-time champion Miguel Angel Gonzalez in back to back fights in 2001. The only thing that has stopped the hard-punching and iron chinned Gomez is a dispute with Don King that kept him on the sideline for months at a time. But with a new promotional deal with Top Rank, he could be headed for bigger and better things.

His last bout against Jeffrey Hill is one of the best fights of 2003. He would get decked early and on the verge of being KO'd before he landed a devastating right hand to the chin of Hill who went down like a sack of potatoes- and it all happened in the first round.

Despite his relatively unimpressive record, Ring Magazine rates him the sixth best welterweight on the planet.

Maybe he's not completely underrated after all - Juan Manuel Marquez- Featherweight: Ok, so you might be wondering how a guy who many(like myself) have listed in the pound-for-pound rankings can be underrated. That's a good question, but the bottom line is this, for as good as he is(and he is very good) he still doesn't get the credit he deserved.

I mean being the third most well-known featherweight in the world the past few years behind guys like Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales must be like being the middle sister in 'the Brady Bunch' in between Marsha and Cindy, uhhhh, what's her name.... oh yeah, Jan. You see what I mean?

But it says right here that even before Morales made the move up to 130-pounds that he may have been the best featherweight, period. Remember what I said about Medina earlier, well, he was one of the very few guys to really spank him like he did earlier this year. And lets look at his mark of 41-2. His first loss was a bogus loss in his pro debut where he was stolen from by the Mexican commission and their outlandish rules that punishes fighters for being the recipient of cuts in accidental clashes of heads. Then his second loss was a controversial loss to Freddy Norwood in

1999 for the WBA crown.

But with the teachings of Nacho Beristain- who's a very underrated trainer in his own right- he has become the complete and consummate boxer and by far the most deadly and accurate counter-puncher in the game.

- Mark Johnson- Jr. Bantamweight: Yeah, I admit it, 'Too Sharp' has always been one of my favorites and it did bring a smile to my mug when he beat the undefeated Fernando Montiel for the WBO 115-pound title. There was never a doubt in my mind that Johnson was a Hall-of-Famer, after this latest win, he's first ballot material.

But the real story of Johnson is that forget all his impressive wins, like the ones against Montiel, Jorge Lacierva, Ratanchai Sor Vorapin, Arthur Johnson, Cecilio Espino, Alejandro Montiel, Franciso Tejedor, Enrique Orozco and Alberto Jimenez, he'll be forever defined by the guys that found ways to avoid him. Guys like Danny Romero, Johnny Tapia, Chiquita Gonzalez and Michael Carbajal. The bottom line is that like a Mike McCallum, who never got to face the likes of Roberto Duran, Thomas Hearns and Marvin Hagler, he was simply too good, for his own good.

Johnson, a quicksilver southpaw is among the most electrifying and yet sound fighter the game has seen the past 25 years. Not only could he box, but he could bang as well. He was as slick as any inner-city fighter and yet could get down and dirty inside like a Mexican. And take away his loss to Richie Wenton in his second pro bout, he's basically undefeated when he fights at or below 115 pounds.

He was thought to be 'Too Shot' after his successive losses to Rafael Marquez(with the first fight being a highly controversial decision that was changed two hours after Johnson was declared the winner) but as his fight with Montiel proved, he ain't done yet.

Hopefully, one day he'll get his proper due respect.