

Hall of Fame Inductions: Glass Half Full

Written by Robert Cassidy Jr.
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What is it they say about golf? A good walk spoiled. That's it. That's about how I feel today.

They announced the latest additions to the Hall of Fame and with one very notable exception, there should be no complaints from the purists or the old-timers.

There should be no second-guessing this year's class of inductees to the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York. With Roberto Duran, Pernell Whitaker and Ricardo Lopez leading the way, the class of '07 is clearly among the best in recent years.

But here is the best news. Amilcar Brusa and Cuco Conde are among the enshrinees.

Now, here is the bad news. Jose Sulaiman will also be inducted.

Considering that many people in the boxing business associate the proliferation of sanctioning bodies with the decline of the sport, I find it amazing that Sulaiman was even considered. A press release stated that he was responsible for reducing world title fights from 15 rounds to 12. Whether that is a good thing or a bad thing for boxing can be debated vigorously. So too can the convenient fact that a 12-round fight fit nicely into a one-hour time slot for the networks that televised his organization's title bouts on Saturday afternoons.

I usually prefer to see the glass half-full, so I will reserve my contempt for the Sulaiman vote for another column.

Why ruin the fun for Brusa?

Perhaps it was the magnificent run of Carlos Baldomir that brought Brusa back to the forefront of boxing. Brusa is to Argentina what Eddie Futch was to America. He trained the great Carlos Monzon and 12 other world champions, including Miguel Angel Cuello, Antonio Esparragoza, Rafael Pineda and Miguel Lora.

"This is a great honor for me," said Brusa. "I'm also honored to follow into the Hall of Fame the boxer I prepared to win the world middleweight championship, Carlos Monzon. He was great and he made me famous."

In a release issued by the Hall of Fame, current WBC junior middleweight champion Oscar de la Hoya said this about Brusa, "One of our all-time great trainers that the sport has had the privilege of having. Still today a lot of champions look for his guidance and expertise. He will always be considered one of the great trainers to be involved in the sport of boxing."

Few people, though, outside of Miami, will speak about Conde, who will be inducted posthumously. He was born in Cuba and got out of the country just before Fidel Castro's revolution gripped the island. He was a sports journalist in Havana, writing about the island's

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twin passions, boxing and baseball. He was also a baseball broadcaster and was featured in a set of Cuban baseball cards in 1947.

Conde was instrumental in helping many Cuban fighters establish themselves here and in Mexico once they fled the country. He worked with Cuban Hall-of-Famers Jose Napoles and Ultiminio Rojas.

Duran, Lopez and Whitaker were each selected in their first year of eligibility and each is worthy of such a distinction. They combine to hold 10 world titles.

We know plenty of Duran and Whitaker, but Lopez had a record of 51-0-1 and is perhaps the most dominant fighter under a 112 pounds in the history of the sport. The lone blemish -- a technical draw -- came in a 1998 unification bout with Rosendo Alvarez when an accidental head butt stopped the bout.

The other living inductee is artist LeRoy Neiman in the observer category.

The Hall of Fame released the names of additional posthumous honorees: Heavyweight George Godfrey, lightweight Pedro Montanez, and light heavyweight Kid Norfolk in the Old-Timer Category; manager / matchmaker Cuco Conde in the Non-Participant Category; newspaper cartoonist TAD Dorgan in the Observer Category; and Young Barney Aaron and Dick Curtis in the Pioneer Category. Inductees were voted in by members of the Boxing Writers Association and a panel of international boxing historians.

The 18th Annual Hall of Fame Weekend is scheduled for June 7-10th in Canastota, NY.