

Smokin' Joe Frazier Long Overdue For A Statue In Philadelphia...LOTIERZO

Written by Frank Lotierzo
Friday, 17 June 2011 20:44



In a special to the Philadelphia Daily News on June 15th, former Pennsylvania Governor/Philadelphia Mayor Ed Rendell penned a column titled "'Up Goes Frazier?' Smokin' Joe overdue for statue.'

Ed Rendell is not someone I've found myself agreeing with during his tenure as Governor, and he is one of the biggest "see me out there politicians" I've ever observed. However, for once I'm in total agreement with the former Governor who has been known to call into sport talk radio shows and who also works as an in-studio analyst on Philadelphia's Comcast Sportnet after Eagles games during the NFL season.

Rendell wrote, "There is a statue of a Philadelphia heavyweight champion prominently displayed in front of our great Art Museum. Is it Joe? Nope, it's Rocky (apologies to Sly Stallone, who is also a great Philadelphian). So consider the paradox. We have a statue of a make-believe movie champ, but we have nothing for the Philadelphian who is clearly among the top 10 heavyweight champs of all time. Yo, Adrian, does that sound fair to you?"

I must admit, Rendell has a point and it's hard to come to grips with the reality that the city of Philadelphia hasn't honored Frazier nearly to the degree they have a fictional fighter like Rocky Balboa. And it's not a coincidence that Rocky Balboa hit the meat in a slaughterhouse during training. The idea was pilfered from Frazier for the movie "Rocky." Joe really did work in a slaughterhouse after he was the only American fighter to capture a Gold Medal at the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo before he was backed by the Cloverlay corporation, which he bought out in

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1974.

On September 1, 2012 a statue of former undefeated heavyweight champ Rocky Marciano will be erected in his hometown of Brockton, Massachusetts. It will stand 20 feet and be unveiled on what would've been Rocky's 89th birthday. It will also be molded on Marciano's famous right hand that knocked out Jersey Joe Walcott in their 1952 world title bout, at a cost of \$250,000. The effort to finally immortalize Marciano in a statue has been a three year journey and it will be erected outside the city's sports stadium which bears Rocky Marciano's name.

Make that Rocky's 2, Joe's 0 on the statue-meter.

Hopefully, it won't take 60 years for Philadelphia to acknowledge Joe Frazier, as it's most famous and perhaps accomplished fighter. Frazier, 67, has been a pillar to the Philadelphia boxing community since he took residence at age 16, and it would be great if unlike Rocky, Joe lived to see the homage paid to him by his adopted city while he were still alive.

Philadelphia is a funny city in a sporting sense. The people of Philadelphia are huge sports fans and hunger for their teams to capture championships as much or more than any other city in the country. But until the Phillies won the World Series in 2008, Philadelphia was in the midst of a 25-year championship drought since the 1983 Sixers won the NBA title. Yet Rocky Balboa has been honored and had homage paid to him more than Joe Frazier? And to think Joe ruled the heavyweight division during a time when being the heavyweight champion of the world was the most prestigious title in sports and really meant something.

"Frazier never has gotten the tribute and praise due him either nationally or, shockingly, even in Philadelphia. Joe has been given the Order of the Palmetto by his native South Carolina, the state's highest civilian award, but has received no tribute from the City of Philadelphia (in part my fault)", said Rendell. Again, I agree with Governor Rendell.

In case anyone needs to be reminded, Joe Frazier won the biggest and most anticipated and comprehensively covered boxing match/sporting event in history, Muhammad Ali didn't lose it. Most sports fans, even in 2011, are well aware of the fact that the first bout between Frazier and Ali (better known as "The Fight Of The Century") was one the greatest events of the 20th century. And Frazier conclusively won the unanimous decision and erased all doubts as to who was the better fighter when he dropped Ali with a signature left-hook in the 15th and final round on Monday night March 8th, 1971.

Joe Frazier was the quintessential blue-collar fighter who brings his lunch, goes to work the second the bell sounds, and swatted away at the body until there's nothing left of his opponent. He is one of, if not the best, swarmer in boxing history. And nobody cut the ring off and went to the body better than did Smokin' Joe Frazier. His left-hook to the head and body is no doubt one of the signature punches in the annals of boxing history. Not to mention that Frazier met and defeated stellar opposition during his career. And only two fighters can claim victory over Joe, George Foreman, who is considered by many to be the strongest and hardest punching heavyweight of all-time, and Muhammad Ali, who is regarded by most historians as the greatest heavyweight ever. Not once did Joe Frazier ever lose to a fighter he should've beat, not once.

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How many all-time greats can say that?

Joe Frazier has a history of being shortchanged. He came out as the foil for Ali in boxing's greatest trilogy. He could more correctly be seen as an equal. And he has ceded the Face of Philadelphia Boxing to someone who wasn't a fighter at all. Philly has always prided itself on having "real" fighters. It should put its money where its mouth is, and honor the realest of the real fighters.

Fans interested in learning more about the Joe Frazier Sculptural Tribute or making a contribution can register at <http://www.joefrazierscorner.com/>

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brownsugar says:

I hope this eases the bitterness in OL' Joe's heart because of his losses to Ali... he is worthy... maybe now he can find some peace.

Radam G says:

Wow! I cannot pass this one up. Hehehehehehe! The "City of Brotherly Love" may not luv a brotha for long time. This is my sneak way of allin' out TSS Reader "ali." He's da MAN in stirring up jive. And on dat I'll bet five. I wanna and gotta know what he has to spit. The first black mayor of Philly shoulda done this to Smokin' Joe Frazier, instead of chasing skirts and having aircrafts dropping torching, smokin' bombs on protesting citizens. Holla!

Robert Curtis says:

If I ever pass through Philadelphia, this is one landmark I won't miss! The Ali legend was built on Joe's shoulders. Without Joe, Muhammad's greatest achievement would have been outsmarting an immature George Foreman in the jungle. What Frazier and Ali did in Manilla was probably the most courageous effort any two athletes have ever made in any contest. Joe was the little guy, with short arms and no verbal skills.

Radam G says:

C'mon, Bobby C! Smokin' Joe had verbal skills -- not just standard English ones. His Ebonic and Gulla tongue are not accepted and respected. And the legend of the Irish GOAT was built on Sonny "Night Train" Liston's shoulders and then Uncle Sam's beard. GOAT Ali whopped an arse of a bully ex-convict, mobster squared jungle hitman and pull the beard of Uncle Sam and refused to fight Asians. As he said, "Ain't go nuffin' against 'em Viet con. Dey don't call me [the N word], or stop me from my choice of religion." YUP! Much of the Ali legend was built on

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freeing the white and black American from ignorance and hatred. Holla!