

REST IN PEACE, GEORGE BENTON

Written by Michael Woods
Monday, 19 September 2011 14:38



He was an ace fighter, and even more highly regarded as a trainer.

George Benton, age 78, a man respectfully called "The Professor," died on Monday morning in a Philadelphia hospital.

He'd battled pneumonia for the past few weeks, according to a story on PhillyBoxingHistory.com.

Benton transferred his considerable knowledge to top echelon pugilists, such as Pernell Whitaker, Meldrick Taylor, Evander Holyfield, Bennie Briscoe, Mike McCallum, Johnny Bumphus, Leon Spinks, Rocky Lockridge, Joe Frazier, Tyrell Biggs, Tex Cox and Curtis Parker. Benton himself bettered his game by soaking up the teachings of a true giant in the sport, Eddie Futch. His stable in the early 90s, with Whitaker, Taylor and Holyfield, for a time made him the top dog among tutors.

Benton, sometimes referred to as "Georgie," happily handed over his keys to the game, never falling pray to the bitterness that could've eaten him up in total. He'd been a world class middleweight. But his career was killed when an attacker who'd tried to pick up Benton's sister and got laid out by Benton's brother buried a .38 slug in his back.

He never did get that title shot he deserved, because of politics and because he was such a slick technician. Benton took some solace when he entered the International Boxing Hall of Fame, as a trainer, in 2001. He also won the Boxing Writers Association of America's Trainer of the Year Award in 1989.

That is not to say Benton, who finished with a 62-13-1 mark with 37 KOs after fighting pro from 1949-1970, was the sort who whistled merrily through all kinds of weather. He up and quit the Leon Spinks corner at the end of the fifth round during Ali-Spinks II, fed up with the chaos and competing with head trainer Sam Solomon.

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One popular phrase you hear pop up fairly often in boxing is associated largely with Benton. "My old trainer taught me one important thing," he'd say. "Win this fight. Look good in the next one."

Readers, we lost another old-schooler today. They simply don't make 'em like Benton anymore. And they likely won't again. He was a product of a different time. You can get a taste of what we lost from this quote, from a 1992 Sports Illustrated feature on the old master. "I was afraid of this," Benton said when his fighter Evander Holyfield said he didn't want to spar, because he was sore. "Lazy. But what can I do? Athletes today are spoiled. Them old-time trainers, they was mean. They took their pistols to the gym, and those mothers would use 'em. God help the fighter who said he didn't want to spar!"

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Radam G says:

Wow! Nice copy. GB was an ace guy and always fly. My deepest condolences to his love ones. I'll see ya at da cross road, GB! Holla!

Robert Curtis says:

Benton's voice was instantly recognizable. Every time he spoke in the corner, you knew you were going to learn something. I remember him on a panel with Dundee talking about the greatest rounds ever. Too few of these wise old masters are left. Freddie Roach may be one of the last Eddie Futch proteges training champions.