

WBC Watch Auction Raises \$1 Million For Pension Fund

Written by Jose Sulaiman
Monday, 08 October 2012 18:46



Pride, nostalgia and memories have mingled, blended and gelled during these past days: on September 15th, three dramatic, high quality WBC fights, then the unveiling of the monumental statue of **Rocky Marciano**, created by renowned Mexican sculptors **Mario**

Rendon

and

Victor Gutierrez

. And finally, the presentation of 12 great WBC boxing legends who, alongside quality Swiss watch company Hublot, raised \$1 million USD in an auction to establish the first boxing pension to offer a helping hand to former champions who've hit hard times.

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On that night, so many exciting and unforgettable memories were recalled because I was witness to the extraordinary sporting lives of these 12 sporting legends. I lived their entire careers and I felt mutual affection, for them all - my idols - whom I consider my children, as I think of all boxers.

Ray Sugar Leonard was the highest bid of the night: \$140.000. It was exciting how, starting from scratch, the bids increased and then surged minute by minute, from one table to the other, until the MC tapped his gavel on the the podium to seal the final and highest bid.

Mike Tyson

was very close. Also

Lennox Lewis

,

George Foreman

and

Julio Cesar Chavez

, whose watches were each sold for more than \$100 thousand USD.

I remember the WBC nominated the great **Roberto Duran**, who was also honored by Hublot, challenger to the champion Sugar Ray Leonard, and in so doing one of the most thrilling fights in history was accomplished. Roberto Duran was already one of the greatest boxers of all time, and Leonard, for me, one of the 10 greatest of all time. Mike Tyson was just 20 when the WBC gave him the opportunity to face the then-champion

Trevor Berbick

, whom he knocked out spectacularly, to become the youngest heavyweight champion in history. He then walked all night through Las Vegas with his green and gold belt tightly buckled around his waist.

Lennox Lewis, official challenger, saw how **Riddick Bowe** tossed the green and gold belt in a trash can at a press conference in London in order to avoid him. The WBC ignored Bowe as champion, and so Lennox fought and won the title to become one of the greatest champions in history.

Also at a press conference with Tyson and Lewis, in a brawl between them and their 20 giant bodyguards, I was knocked down for the first time in my life and seriously injured. But my affection and admiration for both has never diminished.

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Joe Frazier didn't want to fight Foreman, the gold medalist at the Olympics in Mexico. The WBC gave Joe 48 hours to sign or he would lose the title. Foreman knocked him out in Jamaica after five visits by Joe to the canvas in three rounds.

Larry Holmes, owner of the best jab in heavyweight division, and for me one of the greatest of all time, fought for the title against the great

Ken Norton

after the WBC ignored

Muhammad Ali

vs.

Leon Spinks

, because Ali refused to face Norton, his official challenger. This was one of the saddest nights of my life, yet the Holmes-Norton fight was one of the best I've ever seen. When Larry Holmes conquered the title, he went and dived into the pool at Caesars Palace, that was at the door of the arena, with his trunks, shoes and the green and gold belt around his waist.

Julio Cesar Chavez was no favorite of the Mexican press, or any other, to face **Azabache**

Martinez

for the

WBC super featherweight title. But Julio overwhelmed Martinez to win the title. No one imagined that night one of the most dazzling stars of 300 years of documented boxing was born. JC made 37 world title fights. The immortal

Joe Louis

occupies second place, but only with 27 title fights. Chavez also fought professionally for 14 years without losing, and 10 years as undefeated world champion, a truly amazing record.

Oscar de la Hoya won his title against JC Chavez. From there he embarked on a brilliant career as WBC champion, to be, so far, the only professional boxer who has sold over 2.2 million PPV in his fight against

Floyd Mayweather, also an extraordinary record.

Jeff Fenech and **Azumah Nelson**, two of the 12 Hublot champions, met up in the ring, and Azumah defeated Jeff. Azumah Nelson is considered the greatest champion from Africa. Fenech undoubtedly one of the greatest of all time spanning the Far East and the Pacific.

In my years at the World Boxing Council I've been privileged to witness the lion-hearted courage, wonderful skills, the sheer sheen of star quality, and countless other attributes of these boxers who transformed into champions and evolved into legends for their greatness in the ring. They are all 12 of my cherished idols. Truly extraordinary, unforgettable and historic!

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Those memories will indelibly remain with me and so many others, and given meaning to my life.