

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VI Boxing Legend Julian Jackson Inducted Into Hall Of Fame, Says VI Small But It 'Packs A Punch'

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Julian Jackson, a native of St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, who was renowned for his powerful punching power, was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame on Sunday in Canastota, New York. Inductees were selected in December by members of the Boxing Writers Association and a panel of international boxing historians.

Dubbed "The Hawk," Mr. Jackson turned professional in 1981 and scored 29 consecutive victories, 27 by knockout. He retired in 1998 with a pro record of 55-6, including 49 KOs.

"Amazing. Wow. I'm honored to be here coming from such a humble life," Mr. Jackson said. "St. Thomas is only 32 square miles, and if you look on the map all you're going to

see is a dot. But, you know what? The Virgin Islands pack a big punch. We may be a small island, but, man, we have a big heart."

Other inductees

Tough guy in the ring, James "Buddy" McGirt was not so tough on his special day.

Mr. McGirt struggled repeatedly with his emotions on a sun-splashed afternoon, at times barely managing to keep it together as he was inducted.

"I warned you last night that I was going to cry," Mr. McGirt, a two-division champion, said as he looked out at the fans, his wife Gina, and the rest of his family. "Today, my wife, my three daughters and my son, they said something to me that really got to me. They said, 'We're proud of you.'"

"It makes me feel that all the hard work that I did for years, they appreciate it," Mr. McGirt said. "All the sacrifices, not being home, missing birthdays, holidays, graduations. It's a lot of work. I want my kids to know, I'm sorry. I love you."

After giving up football for the sweet science as a kid, Mr. McGirt turned pro in 1982 as an 18-year-old high school senior and three years later won the WBC Continentals Americas light welterweight title from Sugar Boy Nando with a fifth-round knockout. He captured the vacant IBF light welterweight title in 1988 with a 12th-round knockout over Frankie Warren and retired in 1997 with a record of 73-6-1 with 48 KOs. He has since trained five champions.

Also inducted were: Donald Curry; Tony DeMarco in the old-timer category; promoter Don Elbaum; referee/judge Guy Jutras; publicist Lee Samuels; and broadcaster Teddy Atlas. Puerto Rican journalist Mario Rivera Martino was selected posthumously.

Mr. Curry, of Fort Worth, Texas was dubbed the "Lone Star Cobra" for his lightning-quick reflexes and hand speed. He captured the vacant WBA welterweight in a 15-round decision over Jun-Suk Hwang in Fort Worth in 1983. The next year, he became the inaugural IBF champion and unified the 147-pound titles with a second-round knockout over WBC champ Milton McCrory. His induction came 22 years after he retired with a pro record of 34-6 with 25 KOs.

Mr. DeMarco was born in Boston and turned pro in 1948, borrowing his ring name from a friend because he wasn't the legal fighting age of 18. He upset Johnny Saxton with a 14th-round knockout at Boston Garden to become welterweight champion, then lost the title to Hall of Famer Carmen Basilio in a 12th-round knockout. Basilio also stopped him again in the 12th round of their rematch. DeMarco retired in 1962 with a pro record of 58-12-1 with 33 KOs.

"I implore those who visit the city of champions to remember the one single champion that has represented our city like no other champion because he's a true Bostonian," promoter Al Valenti said as he introduced Mr. DeMarco. "And today I get to call him a Hall of Famer."

Mr. Atlas was born in 1956 on Staten Island, New York, and trained in upstate New York under Cus D'Amato, winning the 1976 Adirondack Golden Gloves lightweight title. But

back problems forced him out of the ring and he apprenticed under D'Amato as an assistant trainer working with a young Mike Tyson. He trained nine champions before becoming one of boxing's most popular and outspoken broadcasters the past two decades.

"It kind of is a boxing heaven," Mr. Atlas said. "I've been given this honor today for my work as a broadcaster. I tried in some small ways to make the audience aware of something that perhaps they had not been aware of that would both add to their viewing of the bout and the appreciation they had for what the fighters were doing in the ring."

The Canadian-born Jutras was a Golden Gloves champion and the 1951 Royal Canadian Navy welterweight champion before becoming a judge, referee, and matchmaker. He worked over 75 world championship bouts.

Mr. Samuels, a native of Pennsville, New Jersey, began his career writing for local papers before being hired by the Philadelphia Bulletin in the mid-1970s. After the paper folded, Samuels was hired by Bob Arum to handle East Coast publicity for his ESPN boxing series and has been the publicist for Top Rank since 1996.

Mr. Martino, who died last year at 93, wrote for The Ring, was boxing columnist for The San Juan Star, and served as director of public relations for the World Boxing Organization, boxing commissioner in Puerto Rico and president of the Puerto Rico Boxing Commission over more than six decades in the sport.

Information for this story was gathered by the Associated Press. The paragraphs were rearranged and edited to include Julian Jackson in the opening.