

JOSE CARATTOLI: GENEALOGY OF GREATNESS

By Martin Sosa Cameron



Still is palpable the memory of the rings' success of Avenamar Peralta, Victor Galindez, Miguel Angel Cuello, Jorge Ahumada, or, most recently, Walter Matteoni, all they with anything in common: the Argentinian condition and their international outstanding action in the light heavyweight category. The first professional fight in Argentina take origin in 1903: from then, in a century, had admirable apparitions of shining fighters in that land, but any of the bests are in the beginnings of pugilism in the country, whose trajectory is one of the world most important. And, like the greatest Argentinian heavyweight, Luis Firpo, remains immovable, too the maximum exponent of the Argentinians light heavyweights is in that distant times: the extraordinary Jose Carattoli.

He was so far of to dedicate to boxing by economic necessity, he did it by vocation: "I was pleasing when I played fisticuffs; I never was a provoker, but when anyone incited me, then how I likes this. A friend, who knows my weakness, drove me to a boxing club for to learn how to fight. It was unnecessary. Equable I devoted myself to the boxing. How desire I had for to be a boxer! I devoured all the magazines and journals spoken of champions", said of himself Jose Domingo Carattoli, who born in La Plata, B.A., on September 30, 1906, in the same city of his deep friend Julio Mocoora, that other ace who, too by natural inclination, left his university studies for to interest oneself in pugilism.

The career of Jose Carattoli, a southpaw, developed from 1928 to 1936, in a total of 46 struggles, winning 35 (24 by K.O.), drawing 5 and losing 5, and one No Contest. He was Argentinean light heavyweight and heavyweight champion. Paradoxically, his left hand, the main powerful prominent in the Argentinean pugilism, not only favored to open his way to sport greatness: also, injured a second time, compelled to a premature retirement, when he was in his apogee and the maximums laurels may to awaited for him. It's hard to forget explosive fists when we remember, solely to mention a few, the hands of Atilio Caraune, Eduardo Lause or Rafael Merentino, but the Carattoli left hand, named "The assassin left-handed", was nearly unreal, as the right of Rocky Marciano, his devastating "Suzy-Q". When Pedro Mancieri, Argentinean middleweight champion who conquered and retained his title surpassing by knock out, famous by his aggressiveness, ability and too a very strong puncher, winner over "KO" Macon (K.O. 2), Humberto Quinones (K.O. 6), Eustaquio Peralta (K.O. 6), Bernardo Torrijos (TKO 8) and Domenico Ceccarelli, challenged Carattoli for his crown, the bout was one of the most expected and largest attraction for the fans, one of the fights most remarkable and dramatic of Argentinean boxing. On November, 1933, when the two boys were face to face, in the third round, both men decided simultaneously to throw a blow of importance: in a forced crossing, Pedro Mancieri only did to wink Carattoli, who connected, like a lightning, his famous left hand, and his opponent, fulminated, dropped on the canvas, unshaken. The current crowd, motionless in the presence of the impact and his consequences, stayed to keep quiet. The referee counted until the out and the defeated followed unconscious various minutes. Overcome the fright, when Mancieri, swinging, displayed his recovery, a sudden ovation saluted dimly the victorious Jose Carattoli. That was the power of his famous hand.

The framework of the record of the boxers and as it's connecting and appraising between them is most complex, fascinating and impresses. We dispose vertically, by way of trunk, the arranged enumeration of the fights of who to be us concerned, and horizontally, like branches, the campaign of each opponent, so then antecedents they arrived until him, in a side, and as they continued their trajectory, in the other flank. So we will have a genealogical complete model of the career and hierarchy of the boxer who attracts our attention. A record may be a good numerical settlement, but, more than this, the importance and value of a record is in the names of the rivals.

Before to pass to the campaign of Jose Carattoli and the prominent of his opponents, as we did genealogical references, we must to remember, for to understand and to appreciate his magnitude after, that in the middleweight there are five unquestionable, and each one of them may to reclaim for him to be the great of all: Stanley Ketchel, Harry Greb, Mickey Walker, Ray Robinson and Carlos Monzon; and, between the light heavies, the majority of the boxing history specialists, considered that more than the half of the bests actuated on the '20, we retain this names: Mike McTigue, Georges Carpentier, Paul Berlenbach, Tommy Loughran... (later would come boys like John Henry Lewis, Archie Moore or Bob Foster); much of the mentioned, direct or indirectly, appeared in the career of Carattoli.

Victor Avendano, the unforgettable referee, was one of the greatest Argentinean fighters, and the first Latin American Olympic champion (1928, light heavyweight); in February 27, 1930, he must to fight against Carattoli in an eliminatorily bout for to dispute the vacant national title in that weight: Jose win by K.O. in only two rounds. Vicente Olivieri, former Argentinean champion, was coming of to defeat, among others, Justo Prieto (twice by K.O.), Miguel Zumpano, Aurelio Bernetto (K.O. 5), Esteban Senestraro (TKO 6), Luis Balladores (K.O. 9), Isidoro Gastanaga, but on March, 1930, for the vacant national title, Carattoli beat Olivieri by K.O. in the sixth round.

The Peruvian Alberto Icochea, former South American champion, winner of Santiago Rottoli (TKO 1), Alejandro Trias, Luis Galtieri and the Italian and European champion Bruno Frattini (who scored a victory over the world champion Maxie Rosebloom), lost on points to Carattoli. The Chilean Jose Concha, kayoer of the South American champion Quintin Romero Rojas (winner by K.O. in 9 of the world heavyweight champion Jack Sharkey, by K.O. in 11 of Larry Gains, on points over Gunboat Smith and Charley Weinert, winner in its turn over the world champion Battling Levinsky): this raised Chilean was twice defeated by Carattoli, always by K.O.

Guillermo Silva, the extraordinary Uruguayan light heavyweight, with a draw against the Cuban notable Kid Charol, and winner over Jack Etienne, Vicente Olivieri, Orlando Reverbieri, Mauro Galusso, Rinaldo Palmucci, Jimmy De Carolis, Norman Tomasullo, Harry Fay, Raul Bianchi and the very Carattoli (by decision in Montevideo, the Uruguayan capital), in the revenge shows only a few of all his exceptionally aptitudes, because Jose was implacable with him and her powerhouse hand left ad so damaged that, for to prevent main troubles, his corner forced Silva to abandonment in the short lapse of three rounds. The famous Basque Isidoro Gastanaga (who had in his right hand the same power of Carattoli in his left), between 1928 and 1930 obtained 18 consecutive K.O. triumphs. Had defeated, for example, the Cuban heavyweight champion (and after kayoer of Nino Valdes) Federico Malibrán (K.O. 2); the Italian champion Domenico Ceccarelli (K.O. 8); on March, 1930, the former world champion Mike McTigue (K.O. 1), McTigue conquered the title beating the Senegalese Battling Siki, who in its turn obtained the championship knocking out the mythical French idol Georges Carpentier; too, McTigue folded the world middleweight champion Tiger Flowers (winner of Harry Greb), and the outstanding Paul Berlenbach (TKO 4). An others victories of Gastanaga were over Mauro Galusso (K.O. 7), Raul Bianchi (K.O. 1) and Guillermo Silva (TKO 5). In 1931, when Gastanaga and Carattoli confronted, from the start of the fight, tried to impose the one to the other in a forceful manner, but the Argentinean superior technical ability and his demolisher left maked so unequal the dispute: the cudgelling that Carattoli treated, forced the assistants of the Basque to decide lewdness in the sixth round. They did very good to take care of his pupil of the Carattoli's ravages, because Gastanaga could still boxing and to defeat the German Hans Birkie (winner of Jim Braddock, "Cinderella Man", world heavyweight champion), Charley Retzlaff by K.O. in the first (Retzlaff, also winner of Jim Braddock, was a great puncher, with 52 K.O. in a total of 74 fights, more than the 70 %!), the Italian and European champion Michele Bonaglia (K.O. 1), the German heavyweight champions Vincenz Hower (K.O. 4) and Hans Schonrath (K.O. 5), Steve Dudas (K.O. 1) and, on October 15, 1937, and Carattoli retired, Gastanaga win on points over another legend, the world light heavyweight champion John Henry Lewis.

Now, we arrived to the gold clasp. In 1934, was realized in Buenos Aires, C.F., Argentina, the International Eucharistic Congress, headed by Italian Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who would be after Pope Pius XII. Many experts

considered Tommy Loughran as the greatest light heavyweight of all time; Tommy, a defense master (in his era only comparable to the lightweight king, Benny Leonard), a rarity in the big weights, wherever the attack and the power are the most important, was a fervent Catholic, and come to Argentina because religious reasons. Loughran was a brilliant world light heavyweight champion, of depurated technical and admirable style. Few months formerly, Loughran disputed the world heavyweight title against Primo Carnera, and, being in Buenos Aires, his appearance provoked sensation and fast rained over him offers for to fight in Argentina; the trouble was: in opposition whom? The only meritorious to confront him were the Chilean Arturo Godoy (who nearly snatched Joe Louis the world crown in their first encounter) and the local Jose Carattoli. In his account, at the time, Loughran defeated, between other very outstanding contenders, Johnny Risko (thrice), Young Stribling, Leo Lomski, Joe Sekyra, Pierre Charles, Jack Renault, King Levinsky, Victorio Campolo, Paulino Uzcudun, Steve Hamas, Isidoro Gastanaga, and the world champions of different weights Mike Mc Tighe, Harry Greb, Johnny Wilson, Georges Carpentier, Jimmy Slattery, Pete Latzo, Mickey Walker, Jim Braddock, Jack Sharkey and Max Baer... It is overwhelming: we can to say that Loughran, individually, condensed the best of boxing of the first third part of the past century. The battle between Tommy and Jose was one of the greatest sport happenings of that era. Was accomplished on October 6, 1934. The day before, the main daily of Argentina, *La Nacion*, dedicating a big space to the event, in the most of text, only spoke of Loughran, and did any briefs and eulogistics mentions of Carattoli, and in the graphical printing showed an enormous photo of... Tommy Loughran. Is comprehensible: in that times the boxing attracted multitudes in all parts, the large newspapers and the broadcastings were pending of this sport, and the boy of Philadelphia was one of their largest stars. To sum up: the struggle began showing a lightly nervous Jose Carattoli and a calm Tommy Loughran attempting the accustomed in him: to take possession of the center of the ring, to advance besides allow the adversary to stub him and wrapping the rival in his strategy complete of wisdom; but when Tommy launched a blow, a left reply of Carattoli made him to note that it was not a routine combat; like in his first bout against Monzon, Benvenuti asked at his corner "What put in front of me? What is this one?", Loughran saw at their assistants as saying "And this one? From come out? Why nobody advised me?"; often the left of Carattoli arrived and making to feel his power, and he was gaining in trust and tranquility, while Loughran progressively, overcame the surprise, had to must have recourse to their perfect defensive knowledges for to be able to complete the twelve rounds. When the cards were knew, nobody imagined it before the fight, but after that the spectators waited for the result calm and joyful: by unanimous decision Jose Carattoli win clearly to great Tommy Loughran...

The former world champion wasn't satisfied with the happening and asked for the revenge, and Carattoli conceded him immediately. So, on February 21, 1935, the two colossus turned for a new confrontation, but in this opportunity, from the start of the fight, Jose began to feel intense annoyances in his renowned left hand, each time answering less, and he must to appeal, too him, to all he learned technically of boxing, in addition to be a knock out master, and thanks to this, in spite of his lesion (his left hand broke) arrive to a draw, even if a judge voted for Carattoli as the winner. Certainly, Carattoli appertained to the same hierarchy of Tommy Loughran.

The fractura compeled Jose to be nearly a year inactive, until when, apparently recovered, decided to reappear, and did it against the very difficult Spanish and European champion Jose Martinez Valero, the famous "Tigre Martinez de Alfara", vanquisher of Emilio Bernasconi (K.O. 2), Merlo Preciso, Luis Logan, the brilliant Chilean Antonio Fernandez, "Fernandito", and three draws with the Greek world champion Anton Christoforidis. Again, the left hand of Carattoli broke when the fight commenced, and, in spite of this big disadvantage, obtained a draw. After the bout, on account of the reiterated lesions in his most important weapon, Jose Carattoli chose for the retirement; in that moment, surely, he was the best light heavyweight of the world.

The great Carattoli died in December, 1973. This history is an homage in a grateful anniversary: 103 years from his birth. **Martin Sosa Cameron is a South American boxing historian residing in Cordoba, Argentina.**