

# *Boxing Ringside With Bobby Franklin*

## **Rest In Peace, Gaspar Ortega Great Welterweight From The Golden Age Of TV Boxing Answers His Final Bell At The Age Of 86**



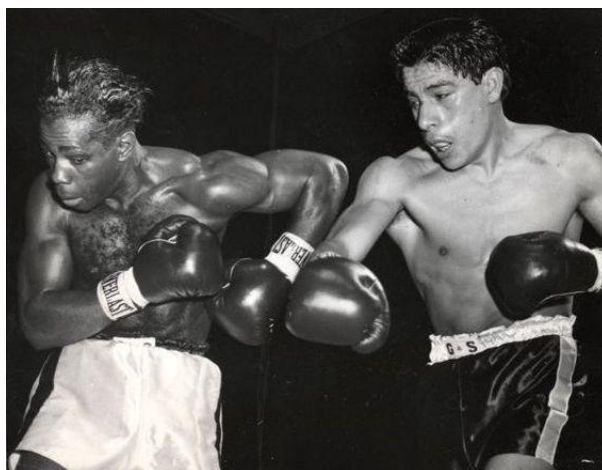
Gaspar “Indio” Ortega became known as the Friday Night Fighter because of his many appearances on the Friday Night Fights during the 1950s and early 1960s. It was a time when many fighters, not just champions, were known by the general public. They were as much celebrities as the Hollywood stars who appeared in the television shows of the time.

Names such as Ralph (Tiger) Jones, Holly Mims, Henry Hank, George Benton, Gomeo Brennan, and many others made frequent appearances on the weekly boxing programs broadcast across the country. Gaspar was one of the most popular and most often seen. His boxer/puncher style and his talent for slipping punches made him a joy to watch in action. I’m not sure, but Gaspar may have held the record for most Friday Night Fight appearances. If not, he was certainly a contender in that category. He was

also a solid contender in the welterweight ranks at a time when being a contender truly meant something.

Gaspar Ortega passed away on December 13, 2021, in Naples, Florida. He was 86 years old.

Originally, Ortega set out to become a bullfighter in his native Mexico. However, he later turned to boxing, where he made his mark turning pro in 1953. His first year in the ring was spent fighting in Mexico, but by 1954 he traveled up to Madison Square Garden to fight in preliminary bouts before the main events. He moved from four-rounders to six-rounders and then had his first big test in 1956, going ten rounds against the very capable and experienced Isaac Logart. Gaspar lost the decision but would come back later that same year and win a rematch by decision.



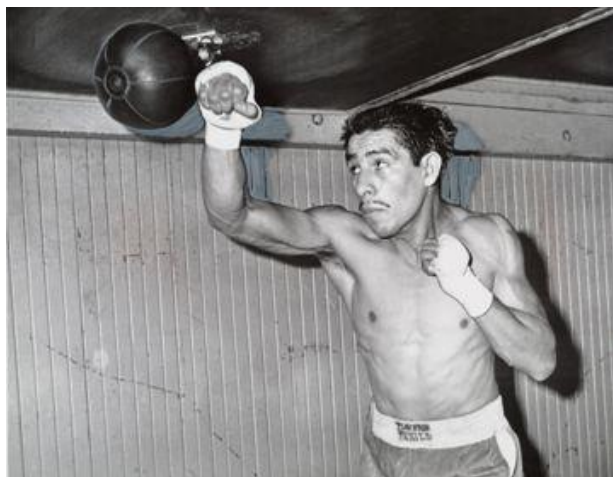
*Isaac Logart and Gaspar Ortega*

He would go on to defeat Tony DeMarco in two out of three bouts and also win against the reigning Welterweight Champion Benny Kid Paret in a non-title match. In 1960 Gaspar lost a split decision to an up and coming prospect by the name of Emile Griffith. Griffith would go on to win the title the following year.

By virtue of his split decision loss to Emile and a second win over Paret, Gaspar was given a shot at the champion. The fight was held in Los Angeles, where a huge throng of Mexican fans showed up to cheer their hero Indio on. Unfortunately, Griffith was a vastly improved fighter for the challenger, and Ortega was stopped in the 12th round. It would be his only title shot. However, it was only one of two stoppage losses over a long career.

Gaspar fought often. In 1963 he stepped into the ring twenty-two times. In 1964 he climbed through the ropes an astounding twenty-nine times. He finally retired in 1965 with a record of 176 total fights, including 131 wins with 69 knockouts, 39 losses, and six draws. In addition to Demarco, Griffith, Paret, and Logart, he also faced Carmen Basilio, Ted Whitfield, Stan Harrington, Nino Benvenuti, Florentino Fernandez, Ralph Dupas, Don Jordan, Kid Gavilan, and Denny Moyer.

He worked with troubled youths in New Haven, Connecticut, where he had settled in retirement. His son Mike is a well known and very competent boxing referee. Gaspar was one of the last from a great age of boxing. A time when boxing was a respected sport, and everyone knew the participants. He was a class guy and will be dearly missed by those who remember his great career.



*Getting in shape at the New Garden Gym, Boston, Massachusetts*



*Emile Griffith and Gaspar Ortega Weigh in for their title fight*

**Rest In Peace  
Gaspar Indio Ortega**