

Dogfight For The Title

on boxing
don cogswell



Billy Backus IBHOF 2009



Dickie DiVeronica IBHOF 2006

Two prizefighters important to the home of the International Boxing Hall of Fame are Dickie DiVeronica, a resident of Canastota, and the former welterweight champion of the world, Billy Backus. Billy is the nephew of the Hall's godfather and guiding spirit, Carmen Basilio. Although neither are in the Hall, both are woven inseparably into its fabric.

The two are also forever joined professionally. Both were participants in a round robin of six welterweight contenders that spanned the years from late 1966 to 1969, culminating in the winning of the crown by one of its members in 1970. IBRO member Jack Sheehan said that the ensuing series of give-and-take fights was a throwback to the 30s, 40s and 50s, when so many fighters seemed never to stop fighting each other.

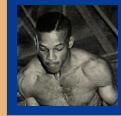
The six members of that round robin dogfight for a title were Billy Backus, Dickie DiVeronica, Sweet Herbie Lee, Jerry Pelligrini, Pete Toto and Percy Pugh. They fought each other a total of 24 times, with Backus cobbling together a home stretch winning streak that ended in a belt.

On a personal note, I'm a native of upstate New York and attended a number of Backus's fights at the old War Memorial. Uncle Carmen would watch from ringside and more than once I'd see him go up into the corner to fine tune Billy's efforts. In at least one of those interventions Backus won by stoppage in the next round.

Billy would occasionally be co-featured with Hal TNT Carroll. Hal would get his title opportunity against the legendary Bob Foster. His loss was not an upset (Foster by KO in 4). Watching Billy's win over the great Jose Napoles, in a Spanish movie theater in San Francisco, was like watching a foreign film's premiere. Was it real or just a new release? A good day for a boy from upstate.

Dogfight for the Title

Sweet
Herbie
Lee



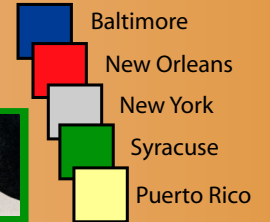
Pete
Toro



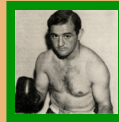
Percy
Pugh



Venues and Hometowns:



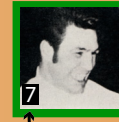
Dickie
DiVeronica



Jerry
Pelligrini



Billy
Backus



Ring top ten rating
at final instructions

Read Left to Right, Top to Bottom

Winner is in upper left corner in each box below

DiVeronica
W8

2/64

1
9
6
6

Lee
W10

10/66

1
9
6
7

DiVeronica
KO6

4/67

Lee
W10

9/67

DiVeronica
W10

7/67

Pelligrini
W10

8/67

1
9
6
8

Pugh
W10

9/67

Pelligrini
W10

12/67

Pugh
W15

5/68

Toro
W10

3/68

Pugh
W10

3/68

1
9
6
8

Toro
W10

6/68

Backus
W10

7/68

Toro
KO1

9/68

Pugh
W12

4/68

Pugh
W10

2/68

1
9
6
9

Backus
W12

7/69

Backus
W12

4/69

Toro
W10

6/69

Pugh
W12

4/69

Pelligrini
W10

7/69

1
9
7
0

Backus
W10

9/69

Toro
KO9

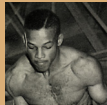






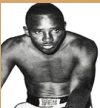


12/69

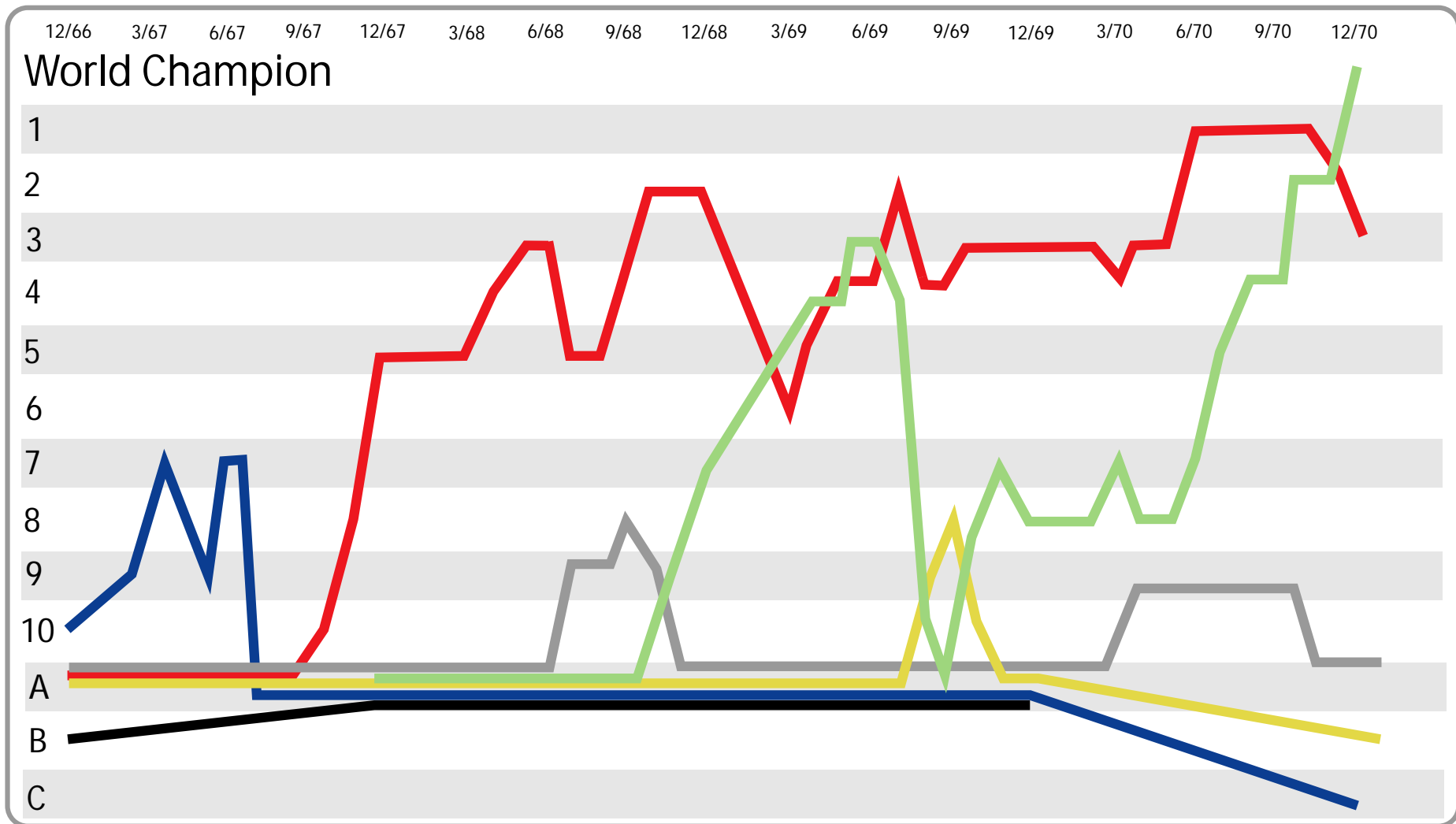
12/70

Billy Backus wins
World Welterweight
Title TKO-4 Naples

After winning the title,
Backus never faced another
one of these five again.

The Ring's Rating Game

Sweet Herbie Lee			Pete Toro			Jerry Pelligrini	
Dickie DiVeronica			Percy Pugh			Billy Backus	



Left Hand Numbers and Letters are Ring's Champion, Top Ten and A-B-C Ratings for the Dates on Top