

FMA Informative

Propagating the Filipino Martial Arts and the Culture of the Philippines

Informative Issue No. 167
2015

Origins of Philippine Boxing



The Origins of Philippines Boxing
Pancho Villa
Benjamin “Small Montana” Gan
Ceferino “The Bolo” Garcia
Gabrile “Flash” Elorde
The Global Pinoy
Filipino Boxing Greats Rediscovered

With all the excitement and pride over Manny Pacquiao triumphs in the ring, global Filipinos should feel equally proud of the fact that fellow Pinoys have been reaping victories in the ring in America, going back to the early 1900s.

Pancho Villa, Ceferino Garcia and Gabriel “Flash” Elorde have been enshrined in Boxing Inter-national Halls of Fame for decades, with the first two winning world championships in those days when restaurants in California carried signs that read, “No dogs and Filipinos allowed.”

In their own time, each one was a hero in the eyes of the Filipino nation. Today, most of them have been forgotten. But the bets are that Manny Pacquiao will be remembered for a long time to come.

The FMA Digest was lucky to have Joseph R. Svinth give permission to reprint his article, “The Origins of Philippines Boxing, 1899-1929” which was published in the Journal of Combative Sport, in July 2001 and is very interesting article on; US servicemen introducing boxing to the Philippines during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

So it is hoped even though this is not a big issue that readers that are avid boxing enthusiasts will comment that there is so much more that could have been said. However this is a taste of a little about Filipino Boxing in its discovery by Filipino’s and on some of the first and finest Filipino boxers in history.

Each issue features practitioners of martial arts and other internal arts, other features include historical, theoretical and technical articles; reflections, Filipino martial arts, healing arts, the culture of the Philippines and other related subjects.

The authors, publisher and owner of this online magazine are not responsible for any injury, which may result from the instructions contained in this online magazine. Before embarking on any of the physical activities described in the magazine, the reader should consult his or her physician for advice regarding their individual suitability for performing such activity.

The ideas and opinions expressed in the FMA Informative online magazine are those of the authors or instructors being interviewed and are not necessarily the views of the publisher, editor or owner of the FMA Informative. The articles are the property of the author’s that wrote them and cannot be used without the permission of the author.

The FMA Informative is for the promulgation and promotion of the Filipino martial arts and the Culture of the Philippines. NO issue can be printed and Sold for Monies, without the express permission of the Owner and Publisher of the FMA Informative.



The Origins of Philippines Boxing, 1899-1929

Journal of Combative Sport, July 2001

By Joseph R. Svinth

Steven K. Dowd of the FMA Digest received permission from Mr. Svinth to publish this article in the FMA Digest. The FMA Informative is reprinting this article also with the authors permission.



*"Pancho Villa, gone but not forgotten."
Illustration by Ed Hughes, 1925*

On June 18, 1923, Francisco "Pancho Villa" Guilleo beat Jimmy Wilde to become the world flyweight boxing champion, an accomplishment that was (and remains) a matter of great pride to people of Filipino descent. Unfortunately, while there has been some documentation of the many excellent Filipino boxers who subsequently followed Guilleo to the United States, there has not been as much attention paid to documenting the origins of boxing in the Philippines.

Boxing Enters the Philippines

US servicemen introduced boxing to the Philippines during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. How this came about is that on April 25, 1898, the United States declared war on Spain, whose colonial holdings included the Philippines. So, on April 27, 1898, Commodore George Dewey ordered his squadron of five cruisers and two gunboats to steam from China to the Philippines, and there, on May 1, 1898, he issued the famous com-

mand, "You may fire when ready, Gridley." The resulting US naval victory effectively ended Spanish control of the region, and in August 1898 the US Army began the occupation of Luzon. Then, to the horror of the Filipinos, the Americans did not cede the Philippines to them: instead they decided to keep the islands for themselves. Between 1899 and 1913, this resulted in savage wars of peace whose heroes included Emilio Aguinaldo on one side and Arthur MacArthur, Frederick Funston, Leonard Wood, and John J. Pershing on the other.

Casualties in these battles were heavy and one-sided: US casualties were listed as 4,243 killed and 2,818 wounded in action while Filipino casualties are estimated at 16,000 killed, plus another several hundred thousand dead from famine or disease (generally cholera). However, after Theodore Roosevelt's unilateral declaration of victory in July 1902, US commanders began thinking about how to reduce the rates of desertion, suicide, sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse, and drunkenness among their soldiers and sailors.

Boxing was offered as a potential solution. The reason was that boxers in training were taught to avoid tobacco, alcohol, and sexual activity. Furthermore, explained writer Charles L. Clay in 1887, "Boxing also makes a man self-reliant and resourceful when assailed by sudden or unexpected dangers or difficulties." This, in

turn, said a YMCA director named C.H. Jackson in 1909, made young men "Christlike and manly." So, in 1902, Major Elijah Halford (a former secretary to President Benjamin Harrison) asked philanthropists for \$200,000 to construct a YMCA in Manila, and by 1904, Army officers such as Edmund Butts were extolling the virtues of boxing in tropical environments such as Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

US Military Boxers

On November 18, 1899, soldiers of the 11th US Cavalry reported finding a pair of boxing gloves made by Sol Levinson of San Francisco abandoned in the Luzon village of San Mateo. According to Damon Runyon, writing in October 1925, Filipino prisoners reported that the "gloves had been brought in by a renegade soldier from the negro Twenty-fourth Infantry, and that he had been schooling the Filipinos in their use."

Many early boxers in the Philippines were African American, as the all-black 9th and 10th US Cavalry, 24th and 25th US Infantry, and 48th and 49th US Volunteer Infantry formed a significant percentage of the American soldiers serving in the Philippines between 1899 and 1902. Following Roosevelt's declaration of peace, most of the black troops were sent back to the United States but in 1913, the 25th was in Hawaii. There the Honolulu Advertiser noted:

The Twenty-fifth is proud of its colored ringmasters and particularly of Hollie Giles, a welterweight of 155 pounds, who is described by the men as a 'whirlwind' fighter; Morgan, a heavyweight at 190 pounds; Carson, a light heavyweight, and Ananias Harris, a light heavyweight. Meanwhile, from 1913 until 1917, the 24th was in the Philippines, serving at Camp McGrath (Batangas) and Fort Mills (Corregidor). Noted African American fighters from this period included the middleweights Joe Blackburn, "Craps" Johnson, and "Demon" White.

Of course, there were also white soldiers who boxed in the Philippines. The most famous was New Jersey's Mike Ballerino. "Ballerino had a chip on his shoulder," Pancho Villa recalled in early 1925. "He dared any of the Filipinos to knock it off." So Pancho Villa did, fighting Ballerino ten times during 1920-1921, winning nine and drawing one. Nonetheless, Ballerino returned to the United States under the management of Frank Churchill, and in December 1925 he became the world junior lightweight champion.

Between 1881 and 1942, the Pacific Fleet enlisted blacks primarily for service as cooks and mess stewards, and the Marines did not enlist them at all. Therefore most sailors and all Marines fighting in the Philippines were white. Examples of white fighters who served in the Philippines include Harvey "Heinie" Miller, a sailor assigned to the USS Wilmington who boxed (and beat) a Japanese jujutsuka during a Manila festival held in 1908 or 1909. Earlier, Miller had fought Jimmy Dwyer for a Pacific Fleet lightweight title. Their fight was a 45-round affair

with four-ounce gloves, and Miller won by knockout in the thirteenth, despite a broken nose, cuts around the eyes, a broken rib, and a broken hand.

After 1902, however, the Pacific Fleet began replacing its Japanese cooks and mess stewards with Filipinos, and some of these latter men took up shipboard boxing. For example, in 1903, a 20-year-old Filipino named Eddie Duarte and another forty Filipinos enlisted for service aboard the US Army cable-laying ship Burnside. (Army is correct; in those days, most ships designated for logistical support belonged to the Army rather than the Navy.) Between 1903 and 1904, Burnside laid telegraph cable between Manila and Seattle, and subsequently it laid cable from San Francisco to Valdez, Alaska. "Every evening when the sailors were at leisure," Carroll Alcott wrote in *The Ring* in October 1928, "some of the boys would don the gloves and a youthful Eddie made up his mind to have a try... Eddie made his first public appearance at the Olympic club, of Tacoma, Washington. He fought an American Indian and won the decision in four rounds. In that fight, he tipped the beams at 128 pounds, a weight he fought at the remainder of his boxing days. The Indian weighed in at 148. In the following years, Eddie fought in Alaska, Canada, and the United States."

Of course, this naval boxing was not horribly sophisticated. The boxers "meet on deck when the spirit moves," the Honolulu Advertiser noted in October 1911, "take up the good natured challenges of their shipmates as they feel inclined, and go at it, to the intense entertainment of their

comrades." As a result, no Filipino naval boxers became more than locally prominent until after World War I. So, as the US Naval Academy's boxing coach, Doc Dougherty, wrote in an article carried by the Honolulu Advertiser in August 1924:

It was as recently as 1920 before a Filipino boxer, Manuel Soriano, got as far as the finals for the Fleet title. This happened when Harry Gordon, now of New York, defeated Soriano for the Bantam Fleet belt in Madison Square Garden in December of the year mentioned.

The very next year, however, Jose Javier, Filipino flash from the U.S.S. South Dakota, won the flyweight championship of the Atlantic and Pacific fleets combined.

And now comes the tiniest of them all, Young Dencio, of the U.S.S. Mayflower. This lad weighs but an even 100 pounds. At times he is as low as 98. Yet this fellow boxes boys weighing as heavy as 116 and gets away with it.

Other early naval boxers included Juan "Johnny" Candelaria, who fought in Honolulu in 1919 and Manila in 1920.

Civilian Fighters and Promoters

US Army General John J. Pershing, who commanded black units throughout much of his early career, hence his nickname Black Jack, believed that boxing built character in men. After all, there was nothing like fighting to teach a man to fight. Nevertheless, from a commercial standpoint, military fights were always of limited interest. First, the War Department did not allow military boxers to fight civilian amateurs until 1923. Second, ships or units were liable to deploy without warning. And, most

importantly, both the Army and Navy discouraged gambling and offered free admission to athletic events.

Free admission and no gambling was not what promoters wanted to hear, and so there were also bootleg fights held out in town. Although crowds were small in the beginning, by the late 1910s crowds of 3,000 to 10,000 were common. There were also bootleg fights held near the Army bases at Corregidor and the Navy base at Subic Bay.

Early promoters included Frank Churchill and the Tait brothers (Bill and Eddie), who opened a ring they called the Olympic in Manila in 1909. The actual location is today part of the campus of the Mapúa Institute of Technology. Fights were held on Wednesday and Saturday. As Churchill put it in 1924, “We ran our big weekly show on Saturday night. On Wednesdays we staged a bargain bill, and on this night we would give all the would-be champions and amateurs a chance.”

Judges were often from the US military. For example, in Manila, one of the judges was from the Army, another was from the Navy, and the third was John Greene, who was said to be head of the Philippine government’s intelligence organization. The military judges included Sergeant Harry Konter, who was stationed in Manila from 1909 to 1919, while the naval judges included Chief Petty Officer Joe Waterman, who was stationed in the Philippines from 1918 to 1920, and who trained fighters at the Olongapo Knights of Columbus gym. Referees included Filipinos; these included Francisco “Paquito” Villa and a man named Gutierrez.

While early fighters included US soldiers or sailors, by the 1910s there were also Australian or American professionals tuning up for fights in their home countries or hoping to extend a career a few more years. Examples of American professionals fighting in the Philippines between 1914 and 1925 include Frank Carbone, George Engle, Frank Haynie, George Lee, Charlie Pitts, Bud Ridley, Bob Roper, and Rufus Turner. Their Australian counterparts included Vince Blackburne, Lew Edwards, Syd Keenan, Harry Holmes, George Mendies, Paddy Mills, Tommy Ryan, and Billy Tingle.

These fighters were ethnically diverse. For example, George Lee was Chinese American. From the Sacramento area, he was a friend and coach of featherweight contender “Babe” Herman Souza. Meanwhile Turner was African American. Due to the efforts of researcher Kevin Smith, additional details are known of Turner’s career, and so a summary is given below. Turner arrived in the Philippines in July 1914. A competent lightweight who had been boxing professionally since 1893, this was toward the end of his career. In Manila, Turner worked for Churchill as trainer, referee, and occasional main event fighter. Until 1918, his opponents were mostly American or Australian, and included Iron Bux, Sammy Good, Charlie Lanum, Spider McFadden, and Bud Walters. However, starting in 1918, he also began fighting Filipinos, to include Enrique Zuzuarregui on October 4 and Dencio Cabanela on October 19. In 1919 Turner continued fighting a combination of foreign and local talent: Harry Holmes on February

8 and July 12; Sylvino Jamito on June 7; Pug Macarino on November 6; and Francisco Flores on November 29. His last known fight was in Pasay on October 29, 1921; the opponent was Jimmy West, and the result was an 8-round draw.

Of course, Filipino gamblers were generally not interested in watching Americans and Australians fight one another. Furthermore, with the Australian entry into World War I in 1914 and the US mobilizations of 1916, competent Australian and American boxers became increasingly hard to get. So, by 1914 there were Filipino fighters in the preliminaries, and by 1919 there were a number of Filipino main event fighters.

Unsurprisingly, one of the first Filipinos to fight a main event at the Olympic was the former Army boxer, Eddie Duarte. According to Alcott, writing in *The Ring*:

Eventually Duarte returned to the Philippines. He was regarded as a hero and after a number of battles at the Manila Stadium, he was matched to meet Antonio Zuzuarriague, a welter, who had gained distinction while Eddie was roaming around the world. Eddie weighed 129 pounds and won the verdict at the end of ten slashing rounds.

... Old age finally exacted its toll and in 1916 Eddie went down to defeat against the youthful Ramon Sanchez. The old veteran is now [1928] 45 years old and enjoys his advancing years by watching the fruits of his early endeavor spring into champions and powerful contenders

Technically, many of these Filipino main event fighters were not very good. As Norris Mills, the former sports editor of the *Ma-*

nila Daily Bulletin put it in 1925, “Many have been ruined due to the management rushing them into the main event class before they were ready. This rushing process was usually due to a shortage of fighters of top notch timber or the popularity of the scrapper.” Frank Churchill indirectly corroborated this observation, saying in 1924:

There were a great many ambitious Filipino lads who craved ring glory, even at the expense of a broken bezer or a vegetable ear. These boys would storm the club on Wednesday night, begging for a chance to go on. Many of them didn’t have money enough to buy an outfit of ring togs, so we always kept a supply of trunks, shoes, etc., available for them. Lots of ’em wouldn’t use shoes. They were accustomed to going barefoot and shoes cramped their style.

Nevertheless, several Filipino fighters of the era were excellent, and the best of them all was the future world flyweight champion Francisco “Pancho Villa” Guilledo. Born at Iloilo, Philippines, on August 1, 1901, Guilledo took up boxing in 1917, turned professional in 1919, and died in July 1925 after fighting a bout in the United States despite impacted wisdom teeth. Standing 5’1” tall, his best weight was 110-115. Technically, he was described as “a tireless offensive fighter with a strong punch in either left or right.” He was also a consummate showman. For example, he always had an open camp where he entertained paying fans with his expert rope skipping, and once, after knocking an opponent down, he astonished onlookers by jumping on the neutral corner post to await the count

Other well-regarded bootleg boxers include:

- Dencio Cabanela. Cabanela was of Igoroto ancestry and in 1920, at age 20, he weighed 128 pounds and had a 17-inch neck. On July 2, 1921, he became the first of three Filipinos managed by Frank Churchill to die of ring-related causes. (The other two were Pancho Villa and Inocencio “Clever Sencio” Moldes.)
- The Flores brothers (Francisco, Elinio, Macario, and Ireneo). All of them started fighting professionally while aged 13 or 14, all of them fought in the US or Australia, and all were managed by their mother. “I can hit harder when mother is at the ringside,” explained Macario Flores in 1922.
- Sylvino Jamito. A featherweight, he claimed the lightweight championship of the Philippines. He started his professional career in 1916. As noted above he had a draw with Rufe Turner in 1919. He also fought in Australia in 1921 and the United States in 1923. According to *Everlast Boxing Record Book 1923*, he had a career record of at least 49 fights, of which he lost only 5.
- Pete Sarmiento (bantamweight). Sarmiento was born in Florida, Blanca, Philippines, on October 15, 1901. At age 22, he stood 5’3” and weighed 118 pounds. Managed by Frank Churchill, he fought in California during the mid-1920s.
- Macario Villon (lightweight). Around 1921, Villon fought a 20-round fight with Bud Taylor in Manila, and gave him a solid whipping. In 1922, he defeated Jerry Monohan in Manila. However, in 1923 he lost a couple

15-round decisions to Sylvino Jamito and Ireneo Flores. Villon later fought in San Francisco, where Frankie Farren knocked him out on June 2, 1925.

Other early Filipino fighters about whom less is known are Frisco Concepcion, Cowboy Reyes, and Johnny Hill; the latter was the son of an African American sailor and a Filipino woman.

Legalization

In 1921, boxing was legalized in the Philippines. The idea was that this would satisfy “the Filipino’s natural love of sport which formerly found its expression in cock-fighting and other vicious sports of like nature.”

The code adopted was similar to New York’s Walker Law, with the exception that the Philippines allowed 20-round fights and paid almost no attention to weight classes. As *The Ring* noted in its June 1923 edition:

The Philippine code permits twenty round bouts to a decision, which goes the Empire State five better. Every champion of the Islands is obliged to defend his title every six months unless something beyond his control prevents him. If he fails to meet an accredited challenger within that period, the challenger acquires the title.

There is one peculiar item in the code which may be due to an error in typing. One of the clauses reads: ‘There shall be a difference of no more than 18 pounds between two contestants except in the case of the light-heavyweights and heavyweights.

If this is true, all the good derived from the new law is nullified because such difference in weight invites casualties.

Collegiate Boxing

Filipino collegiate boxing dates to 1923. Once again, driving forces included the US Army. As quoted in *The Ring* by Pablo Anido, the Philippines' Governor General, Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood, stated that he wanted "to see the Filipino youth master the manly arts of self-defense – wrestling and boxing."

Why? Simply because our beloved Governor realizes from experience that both sports develop he-men who become high class citizens. The Governor in the course of his remarks declared that if every young man would think of his health and physical welfare, and then take up boxing and wrestling as a pastime, the world would have better men and better citizens. That this is so, often has been proven. Boxing develops every muscle in the human body, quickens the brain, sharpens the wits, imparts force, and, above all, it teaches self-control.

... The time when it was popular to be a fop and dandy – when it was considered a sign of good breeding to be able to show delicate and well manicured, effeminate hands, is past.

One cannot be successful in life unless one is in constant 'fighting trim.' One must be in condition to go and keep going at top speed. Hence the reason for introducing boxing in the University of Manila where it will soon become a major sport.

That said, the true inspiration was not the army, but Pancho Villa, and in 1930 the Filipinos sent a collegiate team to Tokyo to box in the Far Eastern Championship Games. Members included

flyweight, Villanueva; bantamweight, John Gray and Guillermo Lazaro; featherweight, Oscar de la Rosa; lightweight, Alejandro Florentino; and welterweight, Carlos Padilla. Although faring well in this contest, the Filipino team eventually withdrew to protest the Japanese referees' allegedly arbitrary rulings. But of course the Filipinos were not averse to making arbitrary rulings of their own, and four years later 5,000 Japanese rioted in Manila following an equally questionable call involving a Korean student fighting under Japanese colors.

Filipinos in Hawaii

before Legalization

Filipinos also fought in Hawaii prior to legalization. Under Section 320 of the US Code, prizefighting was illegal in the Territory of Hawaii until 1929. In practice, however, this portion of the Federal code was widely ignored. For example, in October 1915 the Judge Advocate General of the Army ruled that soldiers could box in garrison provided that there were no admission charges, no challenges from the ring, no decisions announced at the conclusion of fights, and no obvious gambling. At Schofield Barracks, early promoters of military boxing included Tommy Marlowe and Lieutenant Barnard of the 5th US Cavalry, and Sergeant John Stone of the Ordnance Department. At Fort DeRussey, promoters included Sergeant Anthony Biddle of the 17th US Cavalry. The Navy took a similar view, and as result, throughout the 1920s the 14th Naval District Submarine Division held monthly smokers at Pearl Harbor.

As in Manila, the military

fights were not always open to civilian spectators, and due to restrictions against soldiers fighting civilians, the fighters were almost entirely military. This of course annoyed civilian boxing fans, and as a result, from 1915 to 1929, there was also bootleg boxing in Hawaii.

The legal fiction used to circumvent the law was that the fights were not prizefights, but instead 3 or 4-round exhibitions held solely for the amusement of members of private clubs. As the Honolulu Advertiser explained the practice in July 1927, "Membership cards' were sold on the night of the fight in buildings across the street." Examples of clubs that organized bootleg fights included Honolulu's Kewalo Athletic Club and International Athletic Association, and Hilo's National Athletic Club. The YMCA also offered boxing in some of its youth programs, saying, "Wholesome athletics act as mental tonic in the formation of a boy's character."

The reason the law could be flaunted was a case in December 1915 in which US Attorney Jefferson McCarn had filed charges against a promoter and some boxers, and the defense counsel turned out to be the former Honolulu district attorney Robert W. Breckons. Meanwhile, witnesses for the defense included the sitting US Circuit Judge T.B. Stuart. Said the jurist, who admitted sitting in the twelfth row of seats:

I saw these two men engage in sparring on the stage. I think it was three rounds – one minute each and half a minute between. Yes, they had gloves on. Well, they made several demonstrations; I would not call it striking. They would spar and tap each other, just like that... They would, of course,

touch each other, care being used not to hurt each other.

Following this slap in the face, the US Attorney refused to try future cases, and so it wasn't until 1927 that anyone else was indicted, let alone convicted, on charges of promoting prizefighting in Hawaii. (And even then the charges owed more to pressure from women's temperance leagues than any governmental desire to prosecute boxers or promoters.)

Like the communities from which they recruited, Hawaiian bootleg fight clubs were racially segregated. The one that attracted the most Filipinos was Honolulu's Rizal Athletic Club. The Rizal club held its first smoker in July 1922, and a standard card of this era featured Kid Parco fighting Al "Alky" Dawson or Patsy Fernandez during the main event or Kid Carpenterio during the semi-main. Other Filipinos who fought in Hawaii prior

to legalization included Battling Bolo, Young Malicio, Clever Feder, Pedro Suerta, Moniz, Santiago, and Cabayon.

Excepting small gate receipts, the only money to be made through boxing in Hawaii was through side betting. This was unsatisfactory to Filipinos, partly because the working-class fighters wanted to be paid for their pains, and mostly because people from all walks of life wanted to see fights featuring the Filipino pugilists passing through Honolulu on their way to and from San Francisco. As a result, in 1926 the "pugilistic propensity of the Filipino population of Hawaii" was a stated motivation for Governor Wallace Farrington's testimony to Congress urging the legalization of prizefighting in Hawaii. Said the governor:

At the present time a large and growing Filipino population has

very little amusement, and it is a real problem to keep them out of trouble. Their interest in boxing is not surpassed by their interest in any other sport. At every show given, there have been thousands of Filipinos denied admission because the shows were not open to the general public. Boxing will bring them into closer relations with the other races and tend to make better citizens out of them

In the meantime, Filipino fighters such as Carpenterio tried earning money by participating in exhibition bouts with wrestlers and judoka. For example, on May 12, 1923, he met judoka S. Takahashi during a mixed match. "Carpenterio boxed and the professor used jiu jitsu," said the Advertiser. "The first two-minute round was a draw. Thirty seconds after the second round started Carpenterio was down with an ankle hold and the stuff was off."

Copyright © Joseph R. Svinth 2001. All rights reserved. The assistance of Pat Baptiste, Hank Kaplan, Paul Lou, Eric Madis, Curtis Narimatsu, John Ochs, Michael Machado, and Kevin Smith is gratefully acknowledged.

This article represents a step toward correcting that omission. People with additional information or corrections are invited to contact the author at jsvinth@ejmas.com

For Further Reading

- For Pancho Villa's ring record, see Tracy Callis, "Pancho Villa (Francisco Guilledo)." For more about the Filipino boxers that followed Guilledo to the United States, see Cornelio M. Pasquil, "The Great Filipino Boxing Era," *Filipino American National Historical Journal*, 3 (1994), and also Pasquil's film documentary called *The Great Pinoy Boxing Era*.
- For pre-World War I US military boxing, see Edmund L. Butts, "Soldierly Bearing, Health and Athletics," *Outing*, 63 (October 1903 to March 1904), 707-711. For black soldiers of that era, try Oswald Garrison Villard, "The Negro in the Regular Army," *Atlantic Monthly*, 91 (1903), 721-729, while for black fighters, try Kevin Smith's website.
- Data about Philippine-American War casualties can be found in the *Army Medical Bulletin*, 1930, "War Casualties," Roger A. Lee, "Philippine-American War, 1899-1902," and Trevor K. Plante, "Researching Service in the U.S. Army during the Philippine Insurrection."
- Other source documents included clippings from the Honolulu Advertiser, New York Times, and *The Ring*.

Pancho Villa (Francisco Guilledo)



Born: August 1 1901; Iloilo, Philippines
Died: July 14 1925; San Francisco, California (blood poisoning)
Height: 5-1
Weight: 109 1/2-115 lbs
Manager: Frank Churchill
Record: 79-5-4 (25 KO, 20 ND)

Villa was an explosive and relentless fighter who hit hard with both fists, fighting in the fashion of a “miniature” Jack Dempsey; many consider him to be the greatest Asian fighter ever.

Among those he defeated were Johnny Buff, Abe Goldstein, Terry Martin, Jimmy Wilde, Benny Schwartz, Georgie Marks, Bud Taylor, and Clever Sencio; Villa died of blood poisoning from an infected tooth 10 days after his last fight Nat Fleischer ranked Villa as the #2 All-Time Flyweight; Charley Rose ranked him as the #2 All-Time Flyweight; Herb Goldman ranked

him as the #5 All-Time Flyweight; He was inducted into the Ring Boxing Hall of Fame in 1961 and the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1994.

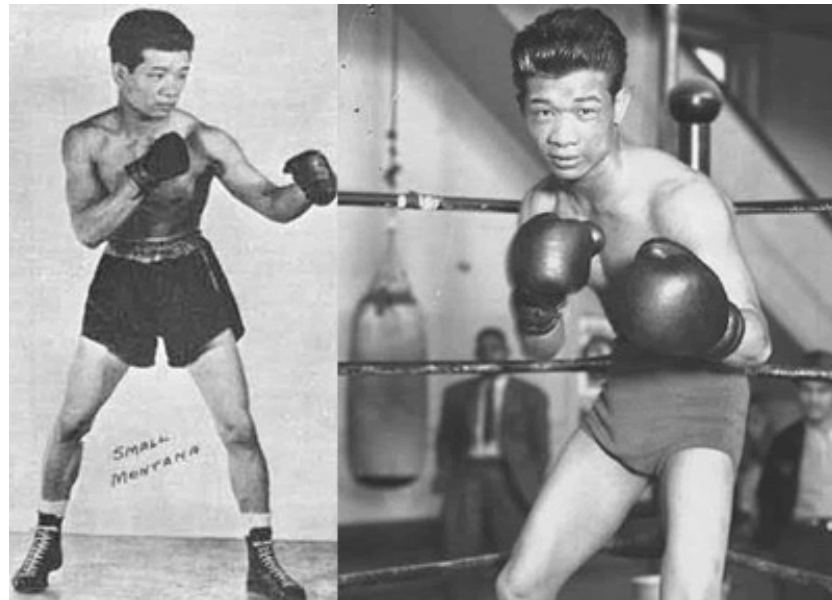
Benjamin “Small Montana” Gan

World Flyweight Champion, Sep 16, 1935 - Jan 9, 1937

Early Life

Benjamin Gan was born in Negros Occidental, Philippines, on February 24, 1913, a son of the local chief of police. He was of Chinese descent.

Gan grew up with the passion for boxing and was inspired by the fights of the legendary Francisco Guilledo. He carried a photo of Guilledo in his wallet at all times. At a young age, Gan changed his name to Small Montana (“little mountain”) and ran away from home to become a professional boxer in 1931.



Professional Career

He won the American flyweight title by beating Midget Wolgast twice in 1935. He also went abroad to defend his title, but lost to Benny Lynch in a 15 round bout in London on January 9, 1937.

He also tried to fight for a world championship but fell short in all his world title matches. During his career he fought Little Dado and Little Pancho (half-brother of Francisco Guilledo) but lost to both of them on points.

Although he never won a world title, he defeated Manuel Ortiz, Midget Wolgast, Tony Marino, Joe Tei Ken, Speedy Dado, Tommy Forte, Augie Curtis, Pat Palmer, Frankie Jarr, Eugene “Tuffy” Pierpont and Antol “Tony” Kocsis.

Boxing records: Total fights, 118; Wins, 83; Wins by KO, 18; Losses, 24; Draws. 10

Ceferino “The Bolo” Garcia

Bolo Puncher was Heaviest Pinoy Boxer



The heaviest Filipino boxer ever was Ceferino “The Bolo” Garcia, who fought in the middleweight division (145 to 160 lbs), who became the New York State Athletic Commission middleweight champ when he defeated American Fred Apostoli at Madison Square Garden on October 2, 1939.

He defended that title twice against two other Americans - Glen Lee on December 23, 1940, at the Rizal Memorial Coliseum in Manila and Henry Armstrong on March 1, 1940, at the Gilmore Stadium in Los Angeles.

The bout against Lee, whom Garcia defeated by TKO, was made more memorable in that the referee was American boxing great Jack Dempsey.

Garcia lost the title to Ken Overlin on May 23, 1940, at the Madison Square Garden.

Garcia, born on August 26, 1906, became famous for the so-called bolo punch.

When he retired in 1945, he chose to live in the US with his family until his death on January 1, 1981 at the age of 77. In a career that started professionally in 1923, Garcia chalked up 142 fights, with 102 wins, 28 loses, and 123 draws. Of his wins, 57 were knockouts.

His death was noted by the New York Times in its April 2, 1981, issue, which has been preserved in its online archives.

Garcia’s name is now in the Ring Magazine Hall of Fame and the World Boxing Hall of Fame. - GMANews.TV

Ceferino Garcia - He had 28 career losses (against 101 wins) and just one brief reign as middleweight champion, but Garcia is credited with inventing the bolo punch. He also became the first fighter to defend a world title in the Philippines, knocking out Glen Lee in a bout refereed by Jack Dempsey.

This article was featured in the Sports Page of the Philippine Daily Inquirer
November 27, 1994

Where is Ceferino Garcia? ‘My brother is still alive’

By Rolando O. Borrinaga

“WHY, is he here?” loudly asked Alberto Garcia, 76 years old, balding, and slightly deaf. Man Ambing, as he is called, posed the question to Primo Hotricano, his acquaintance and my friend, who helped me gather additional biographical information about Ceferino Garcia, boxing’s Hall of Famer who introduced the “bolo punch” and was world middleweight champion in 1939-1940.

We chanced upon Man Ambing one early afternoon, in shabby shorts and shirt and head cap, repairing the ramshackle pushcart which he uses in his trade buying and selling empty bottles in my hometown of Naval in Biliran Province. He now resides with a cousin in the dilapidating Garcia ancestral house across the church in the poblacion. He takes his meals in the house of a nephew’s family some 300 meters from where he lives.

After Al S. Mendoza published my letter in his “Spectator” column last Sept. 14, word somehow reached Man Ambing that Ceferino’s name appeared in the papers. He took this to mean that his boxer-brother



Ceferino Garcia, Madison Square Garden, New York, October 2, 1939. Fred Apostoli lies face down after being felled by a bolo punch in the seventh round that ...

is still alive, and in the country. Thus the almost discordant question that, unfortunately, did not solicit a positive answer for Man Ambing's life-long yearning.

The interview corrected Man Ambing's false impression and enabled him to reminisce his past and the early years of his long lost brother.

Eldest Son

Ceferino Garcia, the boxer, was the eldest child of Fortunato (Porto) Garcia and Pascuala Pieras. The couple bore six children, but only five grew up to adulthood. The second child was Francisco, the third was Leona, and the fourth was Rufina. Man Ambing was the fifth and deemed the youngest, a younger sister having died in childhood. He is six years younger than the champion boxer.

Ceferino was baptized Cipriano and nicknamed Predo. He typified the poor, less schooled, and rural-bred Filipino who aspired for wealth and fame through the boxing arena.

Predo did not complete his Grade I studies in Barrio Caraycaray, Naval, where he was born and grew up to adolescence. This literacy deficiency would later disqualify him from enlisting in the US Navy, the other avenue for peasant escape from poverty in the 1930s. He seemed to have been drawn early to gambling, hantak (head-or-tail betting game, using three old one-centavo coins) being his mania. He was also good in the pool table, and in street boxing matches.

By age 15, when Predo left home for good, he was so feared that nobody would pick a fistfight with him in the neighborhood or in the poblacion.

But Predo was a good blacksmith, the obvious favorite among the three sons of Porto. It did not take long to finish a bolo from his powerful blows with the sledge hammer. Man Ambing idolized his brother for this.

I asked Man Ambing about extant pictures of his brother. He had none. Instead, he ran inside the house from where he got and then showed me his picture as a young man. He told me he had similar facial features with Predo, who was tall, lean but husky, and with thin wrists. The photograph had the typical Garcia features, memorialized in a sketch of his great grand-uncle, the priest who established Naval as a town in the 1860s.

To Boxing Fame

Predo left home with a heavy heart. The cause was believed to be his spurned love proposal to the local girl of his fancy, who supposedly dismissed him for his gambler's ways.

He joined the master baker of the local bakery on a trip to Cebu City, where he was introduced to some boxing promoter and started his professional boxing career. He had not returned home since he left, for which he was sorely missed by many of his contemporaries.

Man Ambing recalled that his brother, having assumed the boxing name Ceferino, became a prominent boxer around 1936 or 1937, first in Cebu and then in Manila. He became famous for the dreaded "bolo punch," of which he was the recognized inventor. In 1938, Ceferino traveled to the United States to take a crack at the world middleweight crown. He succeeded in his quest. During the same year, he provided the country's boxing spectacle of the 1930s when he successfully defended his title by beating the (white) American challenger, Glen Lee, at the Rizal Track-Football Stadium. He was assisted in this match by the famous Jack Dempsey.

Afterwards, he returned to the US, where he probably lost his crown, and did not come back to the Philippines.

The "Bolo Punch" presumably assured Garcia's place in the Boxing Hall of Fame. Two other Filipino boxers had been inducted to this august Hall: Pancho Villa and Flash Elorde. Primo Hotricano told me that Garcia's boxing feats were once featured in an article, perhaps in the Philippines Free Press.

Dispersed Family

Somehow, the Garcia family had dispersed before World War II. Man Ambing's brother, Francisco, settled with his family in Mindanao. He retired as a captain in the Philippine Army. In his deathbed, he asked his children, now settled somewhere in Cubao, Quezon City, to locate Man Ambing. This they had obliged.

Leona settled somewhere in Pampanga, now a lahar country. Man Ambing failed to tell me about her fate.

Rufina got married to an American named Foreman, and settled somewhere in Oregon, USA. Man Amb-

ing recalled that she bore three children by her American husband. He has not heard from her for decades.

The war caught Man Ambing in Manila. Life was desperate there, but it helped that he was the brother of Ceferino Garcia, the boxing champion. Basking in his brother's glory offered some comfort and opened a few doors for him during the war years.

When the US Forces reached Manila in 1945, Man Ambing worked with them as truck driver transporting military cargo between Manila and Cavite. He was offered to join the troops in Okinawa, Japan. But he refused, because he had to attend to his ailing father back in Leyte. The Americans offered him transport to Cebu.

Man Ambing located his father in Ormoc and brought him home to Naval. Along the way, he sold the family's blacksmithing tools to a junkshop. His father died not long afterwards.

Man Ambing returned to Manila, where he failed two attempts to settle down in marriage. He has no children of his own.

Not long ago, he wrote to the US Army Archives in Missouri, USA, to inquire about the possibility of his being recognized as a veteran for his war services. The answer told him that his name does not appear in the official roster of Filipinos who can qualify for veterans' benefits.

Now, Man Ambing is spending his sunset years in Naval.

Where is Ceferino Garcia?

Throughout the interview, Man Ambing expressed his wish to know the fates of his brother Predo (Ceferino) and sister Rufina in the United States. Is Ceferino dead, or still alive? Did he ever marry and raise a family of his own? If still living, Ceferino would be 82 years by now.

The answers to Man Ambing's questions are probably with his sister Rufina, if still alive, or with her children, if they are still in Oregon, USA.

Perhaps, living boxing contemporaries of Ceferino in the US can also help provide some answers.

Fifty years after General MacArthur's return to the Philippines, Man Ambing continues to await words about his champion brother, Ceferino Garcia.



Ceferino Garcia, the inventor of the "bolo punch" and world boxing middleweight champion in 1939-40, is shown in this photograph with his son, Ceferino Jr. (Photograph courtesy of Andrea Garcia Hursala, daughter of Ceferino, Jr.)

(Note: Ceferino Garcia was inducted to the World Boxing Hall of Fame in 1981, but not yet in the other hall, International Boxing Hall of Fame. A rejoinder to this article, written by somebody else, narrated Garcia's professional exploits and his retirement in the United States, where he passed away. Unfortunately, I failed to get a copy of the Inquirer that carried the latter article. Man Ambing himself passed away around February 1996. Around early 2000, a California-based descendant of Glen Lee, whom Garcia defeated in Manila in 1938, informed Rolando O. Borrinaga (writer) that his uncle was in fact white, not black. Very recently (January 2002), I established contact with Andrea Garcia Hursala, Ceferino Garcia's granddaughter, who had stumbled upon my website. She sent me the photograph of Ceferino Garcia and Ceferino Jr., Andrea's father.)

Gabrile “Flash” Elorde

Cebu is well-known not only for its politicians, businessmen, and artists, but also for its athletes. In sports, Cebuano’s pride is Gabriel “Flash” Elorde, regarded by many as the “the greatest Filipino boxer.” Born to a farming couple in the northern town of Bogó, the youngest of 16 children, Lord’s family was so poor that he and his siblings were “distributed” and raised by various relatives. Called Bay (the familiar Cebuano expression for a male friend), Elorde worked as a houseboy for a relative. At the age of ten and without any schooling, Elorde left Bogó for Cebu City. In the city, he worked as a bootblack, construction peon, pier hand, and pin boy in a bowling alley. He started fighting in the ring at the age of 15 and came to be known not only for his lightning jabs and fast legs but his courage and determination. A sportswriter wrote that, during a fight, with “his legs almost shot from under him, his face a rucksack of welts, cuts, and bruises, his eyes mere slits,” Elorde would pull that courage “from some inner, invisible scabbard, and turn the tide.” In his career, Elorde fought 107 bouts, winning 79, including 8 by knockout. He became world champion in the junior lightweight division when he knocked out American boxer Harold Gomes on 16 March 1960. He held the title for seven years. In 1974, the World Boxing Council honored him as “the greatest world junior light-weight boxing champion in WBC history.”

A warm-hearted and generous person, he was active in charitable work, donating money for constructing religious and school buildings. He also built a sports complex in Paranaque to serve as a training center for aspiring boxers. Flash Elorde died in 1985 at the age of 49. He set a record of achievements that inspired many Cebuanos athletes after him. What few people don’t know is that Flash Elorde once studied Balintawak Eskrima before becoming one of the greatest Junior Lightweight Champion of all time.



The Global Pinoy

By Greg B. Macabenta

Other Pinoy Boxing Greats

Pancho Villa, Ceferino Garcia and Gabriel “Flash” Elorde have been enshrined in Boxing International Halls of Fame for decades, with the first two winning world championships in those days when restaurants in California carried signs that read, “No dogs and Filipinos allowed.”

Elorde, while coming much later, was the first Filipino boxer to be elevated to the International Boxing Hall of Fame. This was in 1993. He was also the first Asian to be so honored. Years earlier, in 1974, he was named by the World Boxing Council “the greatest junior lightweight boxing champion in WBC history.”

But the romance of boxing

somehow becomes sweeter when recalled against a background of racial discrimination and prejudice. In those years when Filipinos were often compared with monkeys, prize fighting offered them a way to assert their manhood and to command respect.

Several years ago, Corky Pasquil, a young Filipino American, produced a documentary that told the tale of Filipino boxers in America in those early years. The film won critical acclaim, along with the Best New Film Award in a Filipino American Video and Film Festival.

The documentary would have been consigned to the archives had the Pacquiao phenom-

on not blasted into the scene. Pasquil has resurrected his masterpiece and is now selling copies online.

The Great Pinoy Boxing Era is a 32-minute video that generates genuine pride among Filipinos in America, especially those who remember the period during which the pugilistic triumphs were won.

In those days, walking the streets of California was hazardous to a Filipino’s health. He was likely to get mugged, not just by goons but by policemen because of the color of his skin. One can therefore imagine the thrill that the downtrodden Pinoy felt while watching a kababayan beating up a

white man in the ring.

The promotional blurb of The Great Pinoy Boxing Era declares glowingly:

- You’ll be inspired by the courage and pride of these true Filipino heroes. Pancho Villa put the Philippines on the map as the first Pinoy to emerge as a world champion. His career took off in a flurry of events. After claiming championships of the Orient and Australia, he came to the US in May 1921. Villa quickly became a world-class contender and won the world flyweight championship in September 1923. Pancho Villa’s fame inspired future Pinoy boxers. He set the stage for the great Pinoy boxing era.
- Speedy Dado, the Pacific Coast bantamweight champion in 1932, was one of the most well paid Pinoy boxers of that time. He was so successful in attracting full-house crowds that he commanded 50 percent of the gate total every time he fought. Those gate totals were in the range of \$7,000 to \$10,000.
- Ceferino Garcia was the world middleweight champion in 1939-40. Although he was of large stature, he possessed the quickness and grace of a flyweight. He was known for his powerful ‘bolo punch’ with which he conquered many world class opponents.”
- Other Filipino boxers who won world titles in those early years were Small Montana (real name, Benjamin Gan), who became world flyweight champion in 1935 and successfully defended it for two years, until 1937. From 1938 to 1940, Little Dado held the National Boxing Association flyweight crown.
- In the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles, Cely Villanueva of the Philippines won the bronze medal. In 1964 his son Anthony Villanueva did him one medal better by winning the Philippines’ first Olympic Silver Medal at the Tokyo Olympics.

While Elorde, Garcia and Villa have been immortalized in the boxing world, the Philippines has not been lacking in world champions. Manny Pacquiao follows in the footsteps of many Filipino world titleholders, namely:

- Salvador “Dado” Marino, world flyweight champion from 1950 to 1952.
- Roberto Cruz, WBC junior welterweight champion, 1964.
- Pedro Adigue Jr., WBC world junior welterweight champion, 1968.
- Rene Barrientos, WBC super featherweight title holder, 1969.
- Bernabe Villacampo, WBC flyweight champ, 1969 to 1970.
- Erbito Salavarria, WBC flyweight champ in 1970 and WBA flyweight titleholder in 1975.
- Ben Villaflor, world junior lightweight champ, 1972.
- Rolando Navarrete, WBC super featherweight title holder, 1981.
- Frank Cedenó, WBC world flyweight champ, 1983 to 1984.
- Dodi “Boy” Peñalosa, IBC world flyweight champion in 1987, despite being stricken with polio.
- Gerry Peñalosa, Dodi’s brother, WBC super flyweight champion, 1997.
- Luisito Espinosa held two different world titles, the WBC featherweight crown and the WBA bantamweight title.



philboxing.com



forum.philboxing.com

Filipino Boxing Greats Rediscovered

By Sonny Banerjee



boxing era (1920-WWII), from the introduction of boxing by American soldiers stationed in the Philippines, to the days of Pinoy boxing dominance, to the eventual fading of the era with socioeconomic changes taking place in both America and the Philippines.

Interviews with Fil-

ipino contenders who managed to fight their way on to American soil by implementing skills learned on the fields of the Philippine countryside, affectionately recall their experiences in and out of the ring.

An extremely touching interview is conducted with Robert Hilado, a fighter who was once coined Little Dempsey for his similar fighting style to that of Jack Dempsey, a former heavyweight champion of the world.

Hilado dropped out of school in the Philippines to pursue a career in boxing after witnessing

his ring idol Pancho Villa in action.

We also find out like many Filipino immigrants before him, Hilado was not immune to the effects of racism.

“*Kill that monkey,*” recalls Hilado during a match against an American fighter. It seems a lady in the audience was heckling Hilado ringside, but Little Dempsey would not put up with such contempt.

“*I twisted the fighter out of the corner and blew my bloody nose on her,*” recalls a joyous Hilado.

Pasquil’s compilation of rare championship fight footage, illustrative oral histories, rare photographs and historical research is exceptional and highly recommended for any boxing aficionado or sports fan.

The Great Pinoy Boxing Era won the Grand Prize at the Filipino American Film and Video Festival (1995).

“The Great Pinoy Boxing Era” By Corky Pasquil



“The Great Pinoy Boxing Era” documentary is a 30 minute journey back to the days of Pinoy greats: Dencio Cabanella, Pancho Villa, Speedy Dado, Small Montana, Little Dado, Ceferino Garcia, Dado Marino... and perpetual Pinoy contenders: Lil’ Dempsey, Kid Java, Pablo Dano, Varias Miling, Johnny Ephan, Bernard and Maxie Docusen... and so many more! Through this compilation of championship fight footage, illustrative oral histories, rare photos, and historical research, you will experience the sights, sounds, emotions, and significance of what is undoubtedly one of the greatest eras of Filipinos in sports. You will see the rise and fall of the great era, from the introduction of boxing in the Philippines, to the days of Pinoy boxer dominance, to the gradual fading of the era with socioeconomic changes in America and the Philippines. You will come to know an unheralded group of Pinoy heroes who not only provided the Filipinos of the day with idols, but also gave them a sense of identity and hope for equality in an unwelcoming America.

Watch it for Free: [Click Here](#)

World Champions of the Great Pinoy Boxing Era



This 1994 75-minute documentary offers film of:

Pancho Villa vs. Johnny Buff for the American Flyweight Championship: 1922

Pancho Villa vs. Jimmy Wilde for the World Flyweight Championship: 1923

Small Montana vs. Benny Lynch for the World Flyweight Championship: 1937

Ceferino Garcia vs. Barney Ross for the World Welterweight Championship: 1937

Ceferino Garcia vs. Henry Armstrong for the World Welterweight Championship: 1938

Ceferino Garcia vs. Henry Armstrong for the World Middleweight Championship: 1940.

Villa and Montana bouts are silent film footage with a small bit of audio commentary.

Said to consist of dubious film quality

No Longer Available

School Submission

The schools listed teach Filipino martial arts, either as the main curriculum or an added curriculum.

If you have a school that teaches Filipino martial arts, or you are an instructor that teaches, but does not have a school, list the school or style so individuals who wish to experience, learn and gain knowledge have the opportunity.

Be Professional; keep your contact information current. - [Click Here](#)



Event Submission

Submit your event whether - Seminar, Workshop, Training Camp, tournament, or Gathering - [Click Here](#)



Advertisement Submission

Advertising in the FMA Informative Website is FREE.

An Ad in the FMA Informative can create Business. Your Advertisement for Filipino martial arts forums, blogs etc, can be included in the FMA Informative. Advertisement is for the Filipino Martial Arts and the Philippines.



To submit Forums [Click Here](#). To submit advertisement for products and/or Services [Click Here](#)

Article Submission

Finished manuscripts should be accompanied by color or black and white photographs. Though we take care of materials, we can not be responsible for manuscripts/photographs and accept no liability for same. Every photograph or graphic must be accompanied by a caption Carefully key photos to caption information with a letter or number.

We reserve the right to use any photo(s) as cover material or additional compensation. We also reserve the right to edit material and to crop photographs.

We reserve the right to use articles or parts of articles that are given and approved from time to time as needed to promote the Filipino martial arts and the Culture of the Philippines.

Physical manuscripts should be typed in black, double spaced, and set to 1-1/2 margins (right and left).

Emailed manuscripts should be typed in Ariel or Times Roman, on programs such as Notepad, Wordpad, Microsoft Word, Word Perfect and can be sent as an attachment. Photo(s) can be sent as a .jpg, .gif, .bmp, or .tiff - to submit material for either the FMA Informative Newspaper or an Issue [Click Here](#)

We welcome your article, ideas and suggestions, and look forward to working with you in the future.