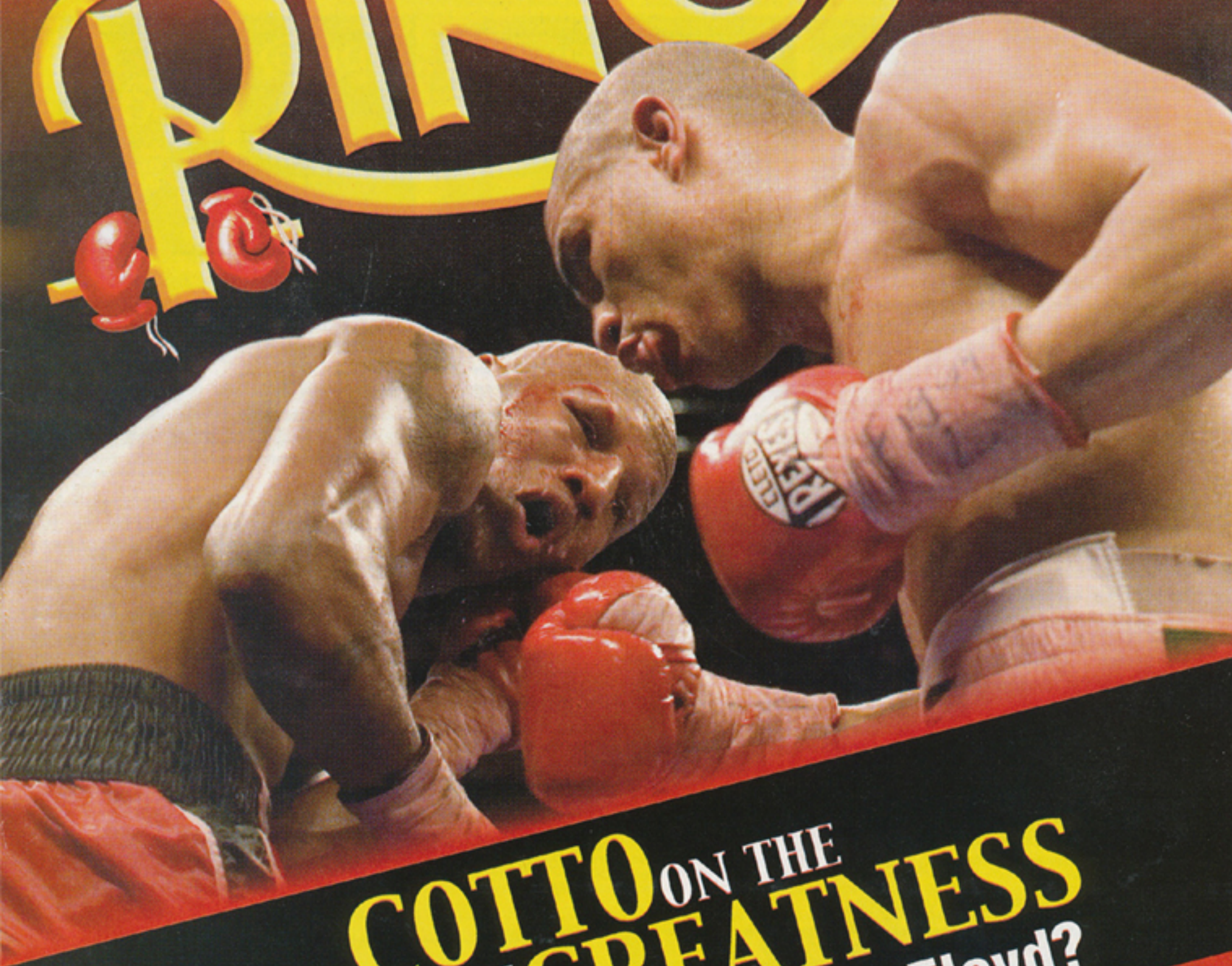


"The Bible
Of Boxing"®

The RING EXTRA



**COTTO ON THE
VERGE OF GREATNESS**
But Is It Too Soon To Fight Floyd?
Plus: **RAFAEL MARQUEZ • KELLY PAVLIK**

OCTOBER 2007

\$5.95 U.S. \$7.00 CANADA £3.95 U.K.



Display Until Oct. 2

Round One

"Bad Bennie" Makes A Comeback

Bennie Briscoe stood at the top of the stairs that led to the banquet hall at Romano's Caterers in Northeast Philadelphia, shaking hands and accepting congratulations from the arriving crowd. Even if you hadn't seen the former middleweight contender since his final ring appearance, in 1982, he was instantly recognizable, head shaven, broad, puncher's shoulders still evident beneath his light gray suit. And although a smile had replaced the permanent scowl he wore inside the ring, you could tell that this was one 64-year-old you wouldn't want to mess with.

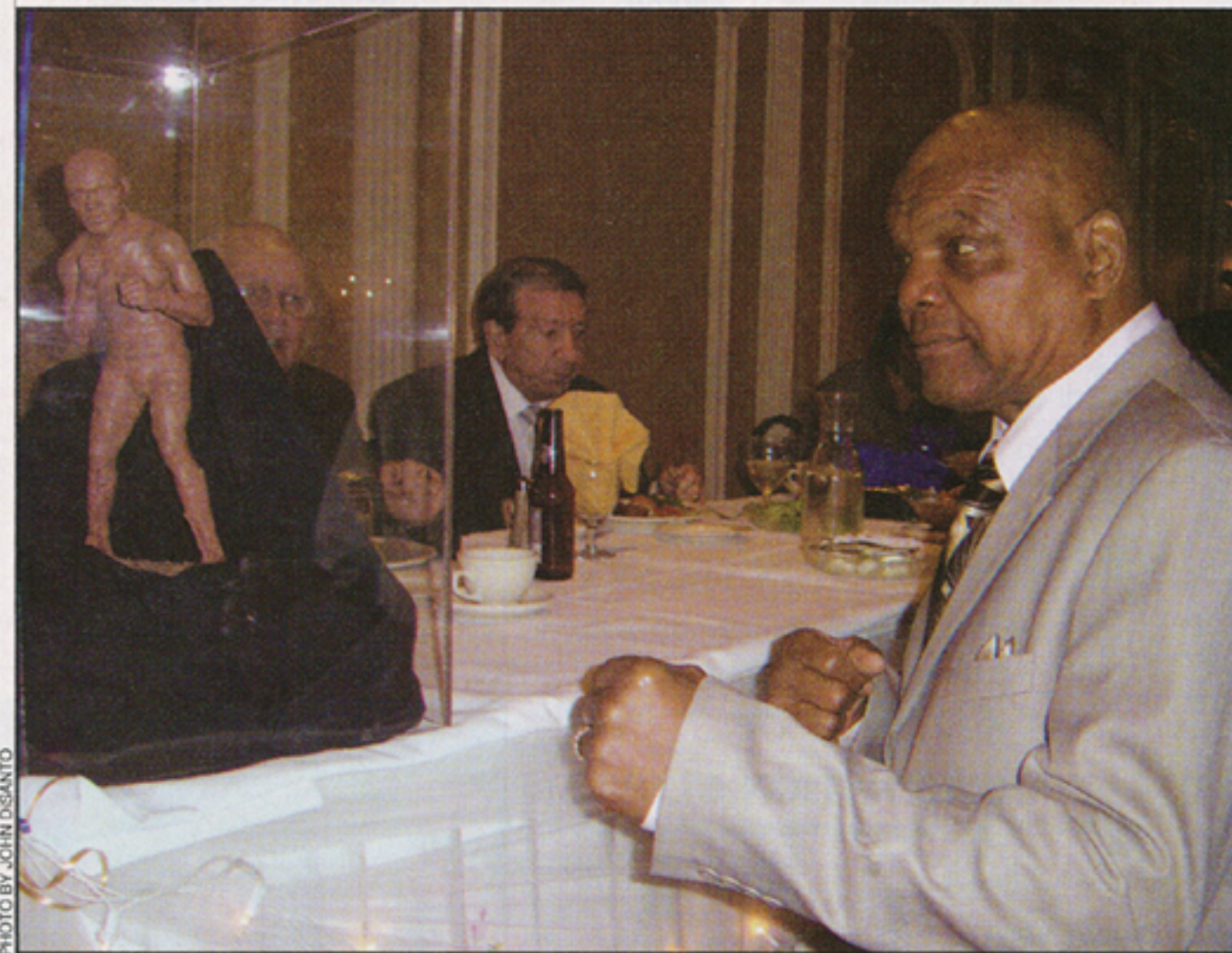
The occasion was the 73rd annual Pennsylvania Boxing Hall of Fame awards, sponsored by Ring One of the Veteran Boxers Association. Briscoe has made precious few public appearances since he retired from the ring, and, initially, there had been some fear that he might not show up to accept his plaque. But there he was in the flesh, the personification of the term "Philadelphia fighter," an uncompromising warrior who seldom took a backward step, never sat down between rounds, and refused to shake his opponents' hand until the fight was over.

Fans who might be worried that they won't get another glimpse of "Bad Bennie" for another quarter of a century will be delighted to know that his likeness will soon become a permanent fixture on the Philly boxing scene, thanks to superfan John DiSanto, creator of the phillyboxinghistory.com website, and local sculptor Carl LeVotch.

DiSanto, who will host the first Philly Boxing History Awards in October 2007, wanted a distinctive, Philadelphia-oriented award to present to the honorees, and immediately thought of Briscoe.

"I could have named the award after any one of a long list of people," DiSanto told *Philadelphia Daily News* boxing writer Bernard Fernandez, "but Bennie is the ultimate Philadelphia fighter. I went to see Bennie and Karen [Briscoe's wife] and I pitched the idea. He and Karen gave me permission to use his name and likeness, which was the first step."

Next, after a brief search, DiSanto recruited LeVotch to fashion a 14-inch statue of Briscoe, a clay prototype of which was unveiled at the banquet. Each year, starting this October, several bronze casts of the sculpture (called, naturally, the Briscoe) will be awarded.



Briscoe squares off with his statue

"We're going to honor a particular Philadelphia fighter, and also a great fight in Philadelphia boxing history," said DiSanto. "I'm also considering honoring a current fighter."

There is a statue of movie boxer Rocky Balboa located on the grounds of the Philadelphia Art Museum, which has always struck local boxing fans as ironic, considering how many great fighters have come from the City of Brotherly Love. Now, at last, there is going to be a statue of a real Philadelphia fighter, one that will perpetuate the legacy of the city's great fights and fighters while also honoring the man who embodies that tradition.

—Nigel Collins