



IRON GAME HISTORY



VOLUME 2 NUMBER 4

November 1992

THE NEED FOR A HALL OF FAME



People with an interest in the history of physical culture have realized for many years that we need some sort of overarching, objective, broad-based Hall of Fame. There are, of course, Halls of Fame in the fields of weightlifting, bodybuilding and powerlifting, but there is no organized Hall of Fame encompassing all aspects of physical culture. This has been much on our minds lately. Thus it was that last month, when we were in New York City to attend the tenth

annual gathering of the Association of Old-time Barbell and Strongmen, we met with Vic Boff and several other people to begin the process of deciding how we might go about establishing some sort of Hall of Fame. We are in no great hurry to do this, and we understand that we need to think very carefully about how best to create and continue a Hall. Many of you probably recall certain Halls of Fame in our field in the past which were short-lived because they were so poorly conceived. No point would be served by rehashing those failures here, but we do hope to learn from past mistakes and to establish a Hall which will have respect and a lasting life.

The sort of Hall we have in mind is one in which members will be chosen on a regular basis on the strength of their contributions to physical culture. Many such Halls of Fame exist in other activities, with the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown being probably the most well-known in this country. We realize we can never rival Cooperstown, but we do hope to develop a plan which will result in a Hall with similar consistency over time and with similar prestige in the context of our own activity. Over the coming months, we hope to be able to establish a system through which nominees can be carefully chosen and through which choices among those

nominees can be made with a maximum of fairness.

To us, it seems somewhat less important for the Hall of Fame to be a place than it is for it to be a set of procedures which allows deserving men and women to be named to the Hall. In other words, it might be the case that, at least for the time being, the Hall would exist only on paper. In time, of course, we hope to find an ideal home for the Hall—a place where living inductees can be formally added to the Hall and where lovers of the iron game and physical culture can go to see the memorabilia and the artifacts of the heroes and heroines in our broad field. The key is to develop a solid set of guidelines for selection.

Our first step was to establish a committee to study the issue carefully. The committee is being jointly sponsored by the Association of Old-time Barbell and Strongmen and the Todd-McLean Physical Culture Collection. At this point, the following members of the committee have agreed to serve: Vic Boff, Founder and President of the AOBs; Joe Roark, IFBB Historian and regular columnist in *IGH*; Al Thomas, writer; David Webster, historian and official; Harold Weiss, collector and attorney; and the two of us.

The job of the committee is not to choose the members of the Hall of Fame, but to work together to establish a set of guidelines under which members can be chosen. Perhaps some or all of the people named above will be involved in choosing members for the Hall, but perhaps not. The International Sports Hall of Fame for Women, for instance, has a selection committee consisting of all the living members of the Hall.

A small group was chosen at the outset, and all future selections have been made by those women already in the Hall.

As a way to help us decide how best to proceed, we have written to over 100 Sports Halls of Fame throughout the United States and Canada and asked them to give us information about



how they began, how they're funded, who chooses the members, how many are chosen each year, if they have a physical home for their hall, and so on. Once we have gotten this information together, we can study the various approaches and determine a sound approach for our own Hall. In making such an important decision, care is more important than speed. Many factors must be considered. For example, should we have separate categories for bodybuilding, weightlifting, powerlifting, arm-wrestling, strongman stunts, coaching, writing, promoting, and so on? And how far back should the Hall reach? Back to Reeves? Sandow? Topham? Milo of Crotona? And how should the issue of retirement be handled? In baseball, players must have been retired for a certain period of time before they're eligible for induction, but how can we apply such a rule in the disparate range of activities which make up physical culture?

As this process continues, we would very much appreciate any suggestions. We think the field of physical culture deserves

a Hall of Fame, and the sooner we all give the Hall our careful consideration, the sooner it will become a reality.



Thanks are due to several contributors to our Library. Martha Deal, daughter of the late Ray Van Cleef, gave us a wonderful set of correspondence between her father and Alton Eliason; Eliason himself gave us a collection of magazines, photos and meet posters; Mrs. Lou Hopfe contributed her late husband's extensive collection of books and magazines; Jack Macfadden, son of Johnnie Lee Macfadden and stepson of Bernarr himself, gave us a beautiful oil painting of Macfadden, along with a collection of magazines and personal correspondence; Vic Boff sent down a certificate stating that George F. Jowett had won the Health and Life "Pose Competition;" and Sal Franchino, who had heard us explain how the Library functions, sent us a generous financial contribution. We are very grateful..

—Terry and Jan Todd