

Sports

► From page 82

Contreras in Curacao, an island in the Caribbean, in 1986.

He had two fights in Japan, one in Korea and one in Indonesia.

The rest of his fights were on his homeland, where he often fought for handsome purses in excess of US\$100,000 in front of huge crowds.

That, and the fact that few top fighters were willing to challenge Khaosai anywhere, conspired to make him relatively unknown except among boxing aficionados.

In 1988, his twin brother, fighting under the name Khaokor Galaxy, captured the WBA bantamweight title, making the Saenkham brothers the first twins ever to be world boxing champions.

Chana Por Pao-in and Songkram Por Pao-in recently became the second twins to do so.

Khaosai fought for the last time on December 21, 1991, in Bangkok, beating Mexican Armando Castro over 12



rounds. A few weeks later, he decided to hang up his boxing gloves with an impressive record of 49 wins against only one defeat – and never attempted a comeback.

Khaosai was widely acknowledged by many to be the best and the most significant 115-pounder in history as well as one of the greatest fighters from Asia.

He was elected to the boxing Hall of Fame in 1999 and remains a national

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hero in the Land of Smiles. A few years ago, he starred in a music video for “Sammud Sabud Mai” (When Three Boxers Became Singers), jointly sung by fellow boxers Somluck Kamsing, Samart Payakaroon and himself.

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“I have expanded into several branches despite the fact that it's likely not to be so suc-

cessful in some places,” added Khaosai, who has also starred in several romantic comedies for both films and television.

“The sport of Muay Thai has already been accepted worldwide and it's a great pleasure to see many Thai fighters make their marks in the career. I think I have been successful in my career and I hope more Thai fighters will follow in my footsteps.

“We Thais are can-do people, which is seen especially when our boxers succeed in major international meets including the Olympics.

“Therefore, it won't be so strange if more Thai fighters step into the International Boxing Hall of Fame, as I have done.

“Pongsaklek Kratingdaeng Gym has also had a great run in his career.

“His 15th title defence will prove if he can be the next great Thai fighter and the first World Boxing Council champion from Thailand to enter the Hall of Fame.

“Let's hope another Thai dream will come true.” ■



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