

Dominguin Proves Most Controversial Figure In Many Years In Bullring

MADRID (UPI)—Only those uninitiated into the magic world of the bullfight are left cold by the sight of Luis Miguel Dominguin, the most controversial torero the bullring knows today.

Each time his lithe, commanding figure appears in the arenas of Spain and France, he is both cheered and booed. Seldom in the history of organized bull-killing has a torero been so capable of arousing such conflicting emotions.

And just as seldom has a torero achieved the world-wide notoriety of Dominguin: husband of an Italian film beauty, one-time boyfriend of Ava Gardner, hunting companion of Generalissimo Francisco Franco, playmate of European aristocracy and one of Spain's largest landholders.

Dominguin, now 32, stirs the bullfight fans into fistcuffs and arguments with his style. He plays it cool.

No one denies his ability, but there are many who charge that his great skill in killing the bull has reduced the sensation of danger to a minimum and has taken away the spectacle's emotional impact.

However, Dominguin's admirers argue that the arrogant way in which he performs his art indicates that he has raised the spectacle to a new pinnacle of beauty. By making the hard ones look easy, they add, Dominguin has brought a new dimension to the bullring.

While the arguments rage, Dominguin goes on collecting arena honors and some of the fattest fees in the history of the "blood and sand" spectacle.

In one memorable afternoon in Caracas, the bullfight world made the ultimate gesture, loosening its purse strings to an extent unknown before or since. For killing two bulls—less than two hours' work—Dominguin received \$35,000. That day, his fans stopped the fight at mid-point to give the torero a new car, a further token of their esteem.

Dominguin can be expected to survive the controversy, for he has weathered worse storms, including a state-ordered nationwide press boycott during which his name never appeared in print in his native land.

The boycott was due to Dominguin's international notoriety. He had dated film star Ava Gardner. Women, it was said, fell at his feet. The order went out that Dominguin's name was not to appear in print.

He also aroused animosity by marrying Italian actress Lucia Bose in a registry office in the United States. Catholic Spain was deeply offended. But Luis Miguel, sobered by responsibility, removed the ban when he went through a second, this time religious ceremony, with Lucia.

Dominguin was born into a bullfighting family on Dec. 19, 1926. His father had won some fame fighting as "Dominguin," a ring soubriquet that stuck.

Luis Miguel was one of three sons, two of whom gave up bullfighting when they failed to show more than average aptitude. From the time he was old enough to hold a sword and cape, Luis Miguel

was pushed into the family ring with baby bulls. He proudly shows people fading photographs of himself, a boy in knee pants, fighting 1-year-old bulls.

At the age of 14, he took his "alternativa," the step from apprentice to master bullfighter. That's something akin to a baseball player breaking into the major leagues at about 16.

His career was sensational. He was in the ring on that August day in 1947 when Manolete died. This fact, too, has bothered some aficionados. They claim Dominguin's youthful competition caused the older torero to take unnecessary chances in an effort to outshine the youngster.

In 1950, Dominguin made a "farewell" appearance in Madrid and then dropped into so-called retirement. He settled into the role of a happily married, wealthy

landowner.

But after a few years, he began training again. He hiked across the sprawling estate in Cueca, 65 miles south of Madrid, to strengthen his legs. Finally, defying the wishes of his wife, he put himself under the watchful eye of his squat, white-haired father who slowly reintroduced him to the ring. He went from private fights to tours of the provinces and finally into the nation's major rings.

Once, shortly after his comeback, a friend asked Dominguin why he still fought bulls.

"Financial reasons aside," Dominguin said, "I like the sensation of being able to control the emotions of the people who come to see me."

"Yes," said the friend, "but what about those days when you are bad and everyone boos?"

Dominguin's soft brown eyes twinkled. "Even then, amigo, it is I who am controlling their emotions."

He reappeared in the Madrid ring in 1957 and left little doubt that he was still a master. One of Spain's most respected critics, Luis Urriate, summed up the fight, and Dominguin's career:

"This torero . . . kindles passions and lights the flame of enthusiasm or hostility in their extremes."

Dominguin has regained the pinnacle of success he knew before "retirement." Only one other bullfighter, Antonio Ordonez, can challenge Dominguin's claim to the coveted "number one" ranking.

Ordonez is Dominguin's brother-in-law. So far, the two have not fought in the same ring, but the encounter will probably come later this year.

Meanwhile, Dominguin lives

the life of a feudal lord on his estate, playing host to the famous and near-famous in a mansion that sleeps 20 guests and is staffed by a battery of servants. He also raises fighting bulls. For recreation, he visits a second estate in Andalusia, where he hunts mountain deer, sometimes in company with Franco.

He numbers Franco's daughter, Carmencita, and her surgeon husband, the Marques of Villaverde, among his special friends and is also on close terms with Spain's would-be king, Don Juan, Count of Barcelona.

Recently, he entertained American party-giver Elsa Maxwell, a seasoned judge of celebrities. She described the lean, handsome playboy-turned-family man as, "First of all a gentleman, then a true he-man, and thirdly, a real charmer."



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CLEVELAND (UPI)—The Cleveland Barons set an American Hockey League record by going unbeaten in 27 straight games during the 1947-48 season. The Barons' string included 21 victories and six tie games.