

Donald Avant Jr.

Donald Avant Jr., was raised in Des Moines by his grandparents and graduated from North High School. He describes himself at “not tall enough to play basketball, too skinny to play football, and baseball just wasn’t my thing.” At 17, he stood 5’8” tall, weighed 112 lbs., and was only interested in one thing: fighting.

“I was a small kid, so I had to prove myself on the streets. Little did I know this struggle was a blessing in disguise! That is until Melvin “Red” Barber took me off the streets and put me in a boxing ring in 1966, which saved my life. Coach Barber, Lou Williams, director of the Jewish Community Center, and John Connors, Iowa State Representative and Iowa Golden Gloves President, were just a few of the mentors I had in my life.”

There isn’t much in boxing, if anything, that Avant hasn’t done: boxer, coach, amateur and professional referee, mentor, President Iowa Golden Gloves Foundation, and Iowa Golden Gloves franchise holder.

“It’s in my blood. It’s my love and passion.”

Avant, has won six state championships AAU 1967-1968 & Golden Gloves 1967-1970 in the 112 lb. and 119 lb. weight divisions, Head Coach of Des Moines Jewish Community Center Gateway Boxing Club, 1976 - 1980 Named Iowa Outstanding Boxing Coach 1979, National Golden Gloves Official of The Year 1989, National Golden Gloves Award of Excellence 1991, Vice-President Iowa Golden Gloves & Alternate Delegate: 1994 – 2000, inducted into the B’nai B’rith Sports Hall of Fame 1995, President Iowa Golden Gloves & Franchise Delegate: 2001 – 2022, Iowa Sports Connection Most Valuable Parent: 2007, Iowa Golden Gloves Lifetime Achievement Award 2009. Avant was also inducted into the Golden Gloves Association of America Hall of fame in Las Vegas, Nevada in 2014 – an honor only offered to one person per year across the United States.

After fifty-plus years of positively contributing to the growth and development of young individuals in the sport by passing knowledge, providing recognition and support while serving as a personal example of the desired level of professionalism required to achieve objectives, Avant retired from boxing. A proud parent, grandparent, and great-grandparent, his spare time is now devoted to his loved ones.