

Box A Round Boxing Club

Written by Steve Kim
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Wanna learn how to box, or feel what it's like to be a boxer, pick up the art of self defense or just get in better shape? If you're in the New England area, Box A Round Boxing Club (BoxARoundBoxing.com) in Stoughton, Massachusetts could be the place for you.

If you decide to drop by, make sure you bring some workout attire, some athletic shoes, some hand wraps and most importantly, a heart. Boxing is not for the faint of heart.

And if you have all that and you decide to drop by, you'll be met by Bud Lakin, who runs the gym and trains everyone that walks through Box A Round. When it comes to boxing, Bud is a one man operation. At this gym, this Bud's for you.

"I've been running this gym for eight years," says Lakin, a former amateur and professional fighter. "It's a full time gym. I used to go seven days a week and I cut it down a little bit."

Like most that run a gym, they aren't doing it for the money. Let's face it, go down your Fortune 500 list, you don't see a lot of gym owners in that group, do you?

"It's not the money," said Lakin, a licensed and certified trainer, manager, cornerman by the Massachusetts State Boxing Commission and the United States Amateur Boxing Association. "I enjoy teaching." Whatever money is made is spent to cover the cost of running the gym.

And teach he does, from 4 in the afternoon to eight at night, Monday through Friday, Lakin dispenses his wisdom. His training methods focus on semi-private lessons, as opposed to classes of four or more students. Private (one-on-one) training is also available.

"They want to learn how to box, not be a boxer" Lakin says of his clientele. "I teach them on a pro level, we do the same routine."

And for those who have never boxed, it's an eye-opening and lung-burning experience.

"I have people, they come in, never boxed or anything and they ask me, 'Do you think I can become a boxer?' Boxing is probably the most difficult sport of all sports, it's one-on-one, there's a lot of focus, there's concentration, there's stamina, there's cardio, there's so many mental things in boxing."

Lakin mentions that it's not uncommon for martial artists, with black belts to come into his gym and participate in his lessons, that are simply exhausted after a single workout. It takes a special type of person to box.

"We're all different individuals, 'Do you like to fight? Have you ever fought? Do you think you could fight? Can you hit another man? Get your adrenaline flowing? If you beat somebody up, would that bother you? What if you get hurt? Would you quit?' All of those things I talk to them

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about."

"A lot of them say, 'No, I don't want to be a fighter but I'd like to learn from you' and that's fine with me. Because not everybody can be a fighter, it depends on the individual. Not everybody can be a basketball player or a football player."

And that's the irony of it all, it's people like this, that really keeps the gym afloat these days. The bottom line is that for a lot of gyms across the country, it's not the fighters that keep the money coming into the gym but the 'Average Joe' that pays its gym dues and for its private lessons that keep gyms alive.

"It's a shaky business," Lakin admits. When asked if other gyms have gone out of business around him, he answers, "Quite a few." The reality is just keeping a gym going with fighters is a shaky proposition unless you have that cash cow.

"On a local level, if you have ten fighters and they were professionals, lets say roughly they were making \$2,000 to \$3,000 a fight," said Lakin, giving an example. "You have these guys fairly active, that would help. But with the trainer and manager it's a 60-40 split, if you had 40-percent with ten fighters, you could make ends meet to keep a gym going."

Boxers Lakin has trained include Tim Flamos, the current New England Cruiserweight champion, Shota Tchigladze, and Narjee Shaheed. Lakin currently trains amateur fighter Mical Weisberg, the recent Cruiserweight division champion at the Rocky Marciano Tournament of Champions.

It's not the middleweights, welterweights and flyweight that are keeping gyms open, after all, many of these guys aren't that active, and most aren't making that much anyway. But you get that plumber, mechanic, electrician, lawyer or financial adviser to take several lessons a week, and that can add up.

In fact, from a trainer's standpoint, you're almost better off training civilians than professional prizefighters. Think about it, with a fighter, you get 10-percent of the purse, for hours upon hours of work put in on a daily basis. And unless your guy is fighting on HBO, your probably making minimum wage per hour if your lucky. When you train a guy who just got off his shift, he pays you immediately, and for every hour you put in with him. It beats working with a four rounder for three months who makes \$500.

Box A Round gets around 15 people per day through it's doors that learn 'the Sweet Science'. Usually about half of them have made reservations for lessons, the other half satisfy their curiosity and take a peek into the gym.

The gym is equipped with the usual apparatus, from a 20-foot ring, seven heavy bags, three speed bags and double end bags. You don't have to be a professional to train like one at Box A Round.