

Pat Lynch – Thunder Gatti's Lynchpin

Written by Robert Mladinich
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Pat Lynch has never had any shortage of entrepreneurial zeal. At the age of 22 he started his own ticket-selling agency, which he still owns today at the age of 47. As a hobby, he became involved with Marc Roberts and the Newark, New Jersey-based Triple Threat boxing organization in the late eighties.

Not long afterwards, he signed future junior middleweight title challenger Joe Gatti to a managerial contract. Gatti, who originally hailed from Montreal, was living and training with Panama Lewis in Jersey City.

“I started out as an investor and wound up becoming a manager,” Lynch said. “At the time I signed Joe, he was the chief sparring partner for Matthew Hilton, who was training for a [1990] fight with [WBO middleweight champion] Doug DeWitt.”

Gatti told Lynch about his younger brother, Arturo, who was back home in Canada roaring through one amateur tournament after another. Lynch arranged for the teenaged Arturo to come to New Jersey, where he signed him to a professional contract. They have been together – through the best and worst of times – ever since.

“I became very close with Arturo very quickly,” Lynch said. “When I watch him fight, it is like I am watching my son. Sometimes it is very hard on my wife. He is the godfather to our youngest daughter and is very much a part of our family.”

Things were not always so intense in the lives of Lynch and Gatti. In the early days of Gatti's career he was a sensational boxer – who also happened to have a debilitating punch. In another words, he was able to knock out opponents without taking a beating in the process. That was apparent from the start.

“Arturo won his pro debut [in June 1991], and then got a swing bout on the USA Network where he knocked his opponent out in 19 seconds,” Lynch said. “The fight was at the Blue Horizon and it set a Pennsylvania record. It made all the news stations.”

In his next fight Gatti took on Richard DeJesus, who was undefeated in one fight, at the Robert Treat Hotel in Newark. Promoter J. Russell Peltz warned Lynch beforehand that Gatti was being matched tough. Others even suggested that Lynch pull out of the fight because DeJesus had such a tremendous amateur background.

“The fight was on the old New York SportsChannel and even [commentator] Teddy Atlas thought we were taking a big risk,” Lynch said. “I mentioned it to Arturo and he said, ‘If I can't knock out DeJesus, I'll never be a world champion.’ He stopped DeJesus in 32 seconds.” (Boxrec.com states that the fight was stopped in 28 seconds.)

As they returned to the dressing room, Lynch saw Dino Duva, who was then involved in

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promoting Gatti, taking three steps at a time. Then Lou Duva came rushing excitedly into the room. “I knew then and there that we had someone special,” Lynch said.

In December 1995, Gatti won the IBF super featherweight title from Tracy Harris Patterson. He relinquished it after thrilling successful defenses against Wilson Rodriguez, Patterson in a rematch, and Gabriel Ruelas.

He was then stopped by Angel Manfredy, which was followed by back-to-back losses to Ivan Robinson. But, in typical Gatti style, the first fight was voted “Fight of the Year” by The Ring magazine.

Lynch began to grow concerned with Gatti’s future. Under trainer Hector Roca, he was no longer the fleet-footed boxer who just happened to have jaw-breaking power.

“I was a little worried about him, and I began watching him very closely,” Lynch said. “When Arturo fought Oscar De la Hoya [in March 2001], I think the HBO people were thinking this is it. Let’s get him a good final payday and see him retire.”

Although De La Hoya stopped Gatti in five rounds, Gatti believed in his heart that he still had a lot to offer the sport. He insisted on visiting Buddy McGirt’s training facility in Vero Beach, Florida. Within two days, Roca was dismissed as his trainer and former two-division champion McGirt went about reshaping Gatti’s style, and revitalizing his career.

“Buddy brought back Arturo’s boxing skills, which were evident when he knocked out Terronn Millett [in four rounds in January 2002], Lynch said. “Then he had the trilogy with [Micky] Ward, which is probably the second best boxing trilogy in history. But I have to admit, in the ninth round of the first fight I covered my eyes and was peeking through my fingers. It was very emotional for me.”

Although Gatti absorbed lots of punishment against Ward, a lot of that had to do with injuries to his hand that kept him from being a two-fisted fighter. Since those memorable bouts, of which Gatti won two, he outpointed Gianluca Branco to capture the vacant WBC junior welterweight title and made successful defenses against Leonard Dorin (KO 2), and “Jesse” James Leija (KO 5).

However, against Floyd Mayweather in June, Gatti was humbled via sixth-round TKO by the man who is who is generally regarded as the best pound-for-pound fighter on the planet. Not counting the Mayweather debacle, Gatti, under McGirt’s tutelage, has looked like a defensive maestro in his most recent fights.

Lynch hopes that his two-division champion, 39-7 (30 KOs), who turns 34 in April, will display that form in his next bout, against undefeated Thomas Damgaard, 37-0 (27 KOs), of Demark on January 28, in Atlantic City.

“Arturo is a lot more sensible and intelligent than his fighting style might indicate,” Lynch said. “We talk all the time about the fact that he will someday have to retire. I believe that he will know

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when enough is enough.”

Lynch is extremely modest and seemed genuinely embarrassed when asked, if by virtue of his managing such a popular fighter, he felt at all like a mini-celebrity.

“A lot of people come up to me and congratulate me on my success,” Lynch said. “They say I did a great job with Arturo, and that makes me feel good. But I feel that he did all the work. I just happen to be the manager. I was along for the ride.”