

Boxing Wiz Angelo Dundee's New Book

Written by David A. Avila

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Angelo Dundee has carried the torch of professional boxing like a herald from Roman mythology.

Boxing is his game and he's earned the tag as one of the best trainers in prizefighting during the last 50 years.

Dundee, 84, recently co-wrote a book with Bert Sugar of his adventures in the world of pugilism called "My View from The Corner" and was in Las Vegas recently attending the Floyd Mayweather-Ricky Hatton welterweight title fight.

Now, another generation of boxing followers can accept the torch of boxing wisdom from his book that details his introduction to the sport and the roster of colorful characters that dwell in the boxing world.

The Philadelphia-born Dundee was originally named Mirena but when his brother Chris Dundee broke into boxing as a manager and changed his name, it made sense for the younger Angelo to follow suit.

During the 1940s, following World War II, boxing was in its heyday and New York was the bull's eye for professional boxing. The elder Dundee managed several top-flight fighters out of Stillman's Gym when fighting at Madison Square Garden was the like a modern day Coliseum.

Upon arriving in New York the elder Dundee placed his still naïve younger brother under the charge of one of the best trainers of that time.

"I learned from the best," said Dundee who worked as a gopher in the beginning. "Chickie Ferrara was my teacher from day one."

Ferrara was just one of a group of trainers who gathered regularly to trade yarns, quips and pass the time. Among the group was Ray Arcel, Charlie Goldman, Freddie Brown and Whitey Bimstein and others who provided a young Dundee with the philosophy of boxing much like Aristotle must have learned philosophy under Plato more than 2,300 years ago.

From these same trainers, who worked with the greats of professional boxing like Willie Pep, Rocky Marciano and Benny Leonard, the young Philadelphia pupil soaked in knowledge that was the material used to guide the careers of Carmen Basilio, Willie Pastrano, Sugar Ramos, Luis Hernandez, Muhammad Ali, and Sugar Ray Leonard.

"When you use the word trainer it's a word that means you got to be a complete guy to help your fighter not only in the ring, but in a lot of other things as well," says Dundee. "It's more than just working the corner or wrapping his hands, you have to be like a mentor for everything."

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Dundee said that whatever it took to make his fighter look good whether it was inside the ring or during an interview with reporters, he was there for his pupils.

"I tell my fighters don't chew gum during an interview," said Dundee, adding that he gave this piece of advice to George Foreman. "Another thing I tell my fighters is say 'hi' to everybody, it don't cost nothing to be nice," he said.

Throughout his career Dundee has earned the respect of fellow trainers, boxers, opposing promoters and the boxing public for being a true ambassador for the sport.

Despite all the accolades you won't find Dundee tooting his own deeds aloud. But if a boxer wants to learn the trade he's willing to guide a fighter whether it's a champion or a four-round beginner.

Don Chargin, the former matchmaker for the Olympic Auditorium and currently serving in that capacity for Golden Boy Promotions, met Dundee more than 40 years ago.

"I first saw him as a cut man for Carmen Basilio," said Chargin, who also promotes fights in Sacramento. "He is just a great man in the corner. He's always ahead of the game with his strategy and great at picking out weaknesses of opposing fighters."

It was normal to see Dundee operate in the corner for 10-rounders, six-rounders and four-rounders all in the same night.

"It didn't matter to Angelo, he gave them all his best," Chargin said.

Working against him

Even former opposing corners like Dundee.

"I've known him since 1980 when Tommy Hearns fought Ray (Leonard)," said Jackie Kallen, whose life story was made into a motion picture. "My first experience with Angelo Dundee was working against him. He's so wonderful it was like we were in a big adventure together."

After meeting during the Leonard-Hearns first clash, Kallen and Dundee became friends to the extent that she introduced her father to the famous trainer.

"They were so much alike they had a lot in common," said Kallen. "They used to visit each other."

Despite the loss of her father, Kallen still has ties with Dundee.

"Now I have Angelo working in the corner of Jimmy Lange," said Kallen who manages Lange a former fighter on the Contender reality television program. "He still gives the best advice."

During the mega fight between Mayweather and Hatton, there was Dundee walking through the

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media center in the massive MGM Grand with a smile and handshake to those who recognized him.

Reporter after reporter walked up to him, even those who weren't in the business during the 1980s or early 1990s, he greeted everyone with a smile and willingness to share a story or two.

Dundee remains one of the few kingmakers, a man who guided a prizefighter such as Muhammad Ali to legendary status and another to superstar ranks in Ray Leonard. But you won't find a pretentious bone in him.

"I get along with everybody. I'm not mad at nobody," says Dundee, now living in Florida. "My best advice is do what you love and the rest is easy."

Writer's notes: the book is a great read. And for those just getting to know boxing, this is a perfect introduction to the colorful world of prizefighting. Bert Sugar remains one of the best boxing writers today and their combined efforts on the book make it a must-buy. The stories are priceless.