

## Greg Page: It's MASS PRODUCTION!

Written by Frank Lotierzo  
Saturday, 30 May 2009 19:00

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I can't say I knew Greg Page or that we were friends, but for a week or so in October of 1979 our lives intersected when he came to Philly to train for his fourth pro bout. In late 1979 I was an amateur (31-2) middleweight training at Frazier's gym in North Philadelphia. At that time my dream of possibly making the 1980 Olympic team was still alive. In the spring of 1980 I sustained a broken jaw sparring Charles Singleton and didn't compete in the tournaments leading up to the trials. As it turned out President Carter boycotted the Games to be held in Moscow due to the Russians invading Afghanistan in August of 1979.

Greg had gone to a couple different gyms in Philadelphia to train before he ended up training at Frazier's on the corner of Broad and Glenwood -- due to the sparring and work he could get there. At that time it was "the" boxing Gym on the East Coast and maybe the entire country. It was routine to see heavyweights Pinklon Thomas, Marvin Stinson, Randall "Tex" Cobb, Jimmy Young, Mike Koranicki and sometimes Tim Witherspoon (who had just made his pro debut) there training and sparring. It was also routine to see amateurs David Bey, Marvis Frazier and Bonecrusher Smith training and sparring with the above mentioned pros.

Page had just turned pro four months earlier and only had three fights at that time. I went to Convention Hall with Tex Cobb, Tim Witherspoon and a couple other guys to see him score a third round knockout over Frank Brown. Four months later Greg would knock out a fighter named Clayman Parker in the first round. Ironically, Parker was one of Page's sparring partners while he trained at Frazier's for his fight with Brown.

Greg also sparred Cobb two or three times along with Bonecrusher Smith and Marvis Frazier once each. Cobb wasn't yet rated and Marvis and Bonecrusher were still fighting amateur. Based on the sparring I saw you couldn't glean too much. He couldn't hurt Cobb, obviously, and he and Marvis only went at it once because it turned into a fight with big gloves and head gear on. Marvis like his father only had one speed -- on. So they kept them apart after that. However, Bonecrusher had a bruised rib when he sparred Greg and it was re-aggravated as a result.

One memory that I'll never forget as long as I live was an exchange I had with Greg while he was working the heavy bag and I was working the speed bag, actually the peanut bag. Greg had this huge boom box that he carried with him to the gym when he trained; everybody did at that time. In fact the only fighter who had a bigger one than Greg Page was Michael Spinks. Joe didn't have a problem with guys listening to their boom boxes while training as long as he wasn't working out (which was seldom in late 1979) listening to Bobby Womack on the gym sound system.

Anyhow, Greg was blasting a tape that I didn't know who the group was, but their sound really pumped me up while training. So I thought, let me ask him who it is so I can buy the cassette later today or tomorrow. So I go up to Greg in between time and ask him who he's listening to. He told me he just got the tape the day before and couldn't stop listening to it. Which I fully understood.

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Greg pretty much kept to himself when he first showed up, but not in a 'Don't talk to me way' like Thomas Hearns. Page opened up and became somewhat conversant after exchanging a few words with him. At least that's how it went with me. Hearns came to Frazier's earlier that year to train for his bout with Alfonso Hayman at the Spectrum. Tommy had a little bit of a prima-donna attitude when he first got there. Hayman would go on to be the first fighter that Hearns didn't stop, halting his streak of 17 consecutive knockouts to start his career.

So Page tells me who the group is that he's listening to but I misunderstood him. They sang the song "Firecracker." Dopey me said after he told me, "Thanks man, I've heard of Brass Construction before."

And he shakes his head and yells, "Not Brass Construction, it's Mass Production."

I said, "Yeah man, I know of Brass Construction."

"NO! Mass Production!"

And I repeat, "Yeah Brass Construction, I know man, I've heard of them."

Now he's pissed and rolling his eyes. With a bunch of guys training and a couple other boxes along with his blaring, he's hell bent on setting me straight. So he waves me over to him and turns his box down as I'm walking towards him.

He said, "Man, it's MASS PRODUCTION, not Brass Construction."

Well, I felt like the biggest chump in the world if ever there was one. I said sorry man, but they sounded the same through the noise. He said that's why I wanted you to know that it wasn't Brass Construction.

Later that night I went out and bought the tape. And for the next week or so we compared what songs we liked on it. One thing led to another and we'd shake hands when we saw each other and before you knew it we began to verbally spar. Soon I began messing with him about how he'd be best served to stay away and try to avoid fighting Michael Dokes and Gerry Cooney, who like him were up and coming, which had Greg in hysterics.

Greg messed with me back. A couple times while I was hitting the heavy bag he'd go by and nonchalantly shove it away. One day after I got done sparring Caveman Lee, Greg came up and said, "I see my man can punch and has an anger problem." To which I responded, "You're lucky I'm a middleweight and not a heavyweight or you'd be on a diet." Which again had him in stitches. During that week we also had a couple of real conversations and through them Greg conveyed to me that basketball was his first love, not boxing. And that he was a fan of the Louisville Cardinals.

On the last day of his training before his fight, he comes up to me and says, "Hey, Mr. Brass Construction, do you have any friends besides me?" To which I responded, no, just you. He then says something like, "As much as you mess with people you probably don't, but if you can

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get one between now and my fight, here's two tickets. Then he shook my hand and walked away shaking his head, "Ain't no effin Brass Construction."

Those are my memories of the week I crossed paths with future WBA heavyweight champion Greg Page. From what I observed Greg trained hard in the gym and was very positive about the things around him and where he was going. My interaction with Greg led me to root for him every time he fought, with the exception being when he fought Tim Witherspoon, who I knew better than I did Greg, for the WBC heavyweight title. Even at that it wasn't like I was rooting against Greg. In fact every fighter or person that I know of who interacted with Greg Page while he was in Philly that week really liked him.

As most boxing fans know, Greg Page passed away at age 50 on April 27th. Eight years ago Greg suffered a massive injury to his brain in his last fight. His wife Patricia stood by his side and was with him morning, noon and night from the time of the accident until his passing. I shared this story with Patricia back in 2006. In her e-mail back to me she said she was going to convey it to Greg as soon as he came out of the coma he was in at that time. She also said what I had conveyed to her was just the kind of Greg Page story she needed on that particular day. Which of course made me glad that I shared it with her.

I love the sport of boxing. Through it I got to meet and hang out with a guy like Greg Page for a week. I won't ever forget the privilege. On the other hand when I see what boxing can do to people like Greg and Patricia Page, I ask myself why I love it so much.

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