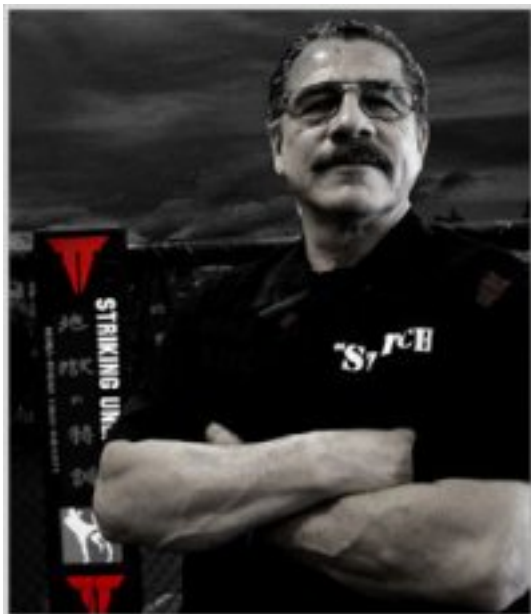


"Stitch" Duran: This Cut Man Gets Priority Position

Written by Raymond Markarian
Thursday, 30 December 2010 16:38



As a young boy, humble and hardworking, work was repetitive for Jacob Duran. Picking cotton, picking peaches, picking tomatoes, in the heart of the summer dry heat of the central valley in California was not exactly the ideal life of the typical teenager boy. But it was all that Duran knew growing up in a family of farmers. His parents, cousins, and uncles all worked that farmland in the outskirts of the San Joaquin Valley. They worked with all types of produce. Basically, if you ate it, they picked it.

Therefore, for Duran, who now goes by "Stitch," going to Air Force was a signal of ambition. And what he learned in Thailand turned out to be symbolic of his future.

Today, Duran is one of the most respected cut men in the fight business. He has worked with many of the greatest boxers in the game including current champions the Klitschko brothers, and Andre Ward. But he is also well known for creating the blueprint for the regulatory measures of treatment on cuts in the UFC; he uses the same system in boxing, and tries to implement his theories throughout the sport.

Like most other cut men, Duran did not receive a PHD in anatomy or kinesiology to earn his stripes and work a corner. He learned his trade from experience, traveling to Himalayan lands to gain his wisdom. Although Duran is now a master of stopping the bleeding, he is still a proud student of the game.

After graduating high school, Duran attempted to pursue a childhood dream of becoming a baseball player. But he could not afford to go to college, so in 1972, Duran joined the Air Force. In 1974, Duran was stationed in Thailand, and he used his time aboard to pursue a childhood passion.

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"I always told myself as I got out of the valley growing up that I wanted to study the martial arts. My first encounter with martial arts was at a Muay Thai fight in Thailand. I saw some guy get knocked out with a kick to the head and I thought, man that is what I want to do," Duran said. "So the following Monday I went to the base recreations, over there they usually taught Tae Kwan Do. But the Koreans had already left. So they converted us into Muay Thai. That whole year I ate and slept martial arts."

After practicing the Muay Thai style of fighting for the first time, Stitch felt like he had some studying to do. He wanted to know the roots of the fight game in and out.

"I really did not know the chemistry of fighting. You know, I grew up in a small town. So, it just was not in our DNA to be in the fight game. I always wanted to study to be a martial artist and I wanted to go to Korea because I knew that was where Tae Kwan Do was at. That was the sport that was pretty hot at that point. But they sent me to Thailand. And not knowing the difference, I began to train and learn Muay Thai."

After learning Muay Thai, Duran fought in karate tournaments in Thailand and won them all. When he returned to the states, while still in the military, Duran had an itch to continue his training and test himself against other martial artists. He began fighting in karate tournaments in South Dakota and had an immaculate record. What was Duran's trick? He was practicing Muay Thai while his opponents were using karate.

Duran said that he had some awesome kicks. One of his opponents during a fight actually came up to him and said that he was kicking too hard.

But he thought that he was never built to be a fighter. He moved back to northern California after leaving the Air Force and got a normal-type career job working for a micro company with all the health benefits and a company car.

However Duran, the supposed corporate prodigy, only worked about five hours a day. Although he did not envision himself to be a great fighter, the game was still in his blood.

"Number one, I was a martial artist. I was very good at what I did. But one thing that I lacked was my skills in boxing. When I saw Charles King opening up this gym (King's Gym, in Oakland, Ca) I would go visit him because my accounts for the micro company were in downtown Oakland. So I would always be driving from account to account and go stop by and talk to Charles before he opened the gym."

Once King's Gym finally opened, Duran was the first person to sign up. He joined King's to better his boxing ability and be a complete martial artist. He wanted to combine his boxing with kickboxing, better his hands to complement his legs, elbows, and knees.

There at King's, Stitch began working with amateur boxers and learning the game of boxing. It was his first foray into the business aspect of fighting as well. Duran worked with the first

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Golden Gloves champions that came out of King's Gym. He also promoted the first amateur boxing event at the Henry J. Kaiser Auditorium in Oakland, Ca.

Then, Duran moved to Fairfield, Ca to open up his own school of kickboxing called the American School of Kickboxing. At ASK, Duran practically did it all.

"At ASK, I trained fighters, promoted fighters, managed fighters, I did the marketing, and I worked cuts. I liked being a cut man. So my wife, the kids, and I packed it up and moved to Vegas. Then the UFC came around, and I am working with both now, boxing and MMA."

Now, Jacob "Stitch" Duran goes all over the world to be a cut man in both boxing and the UFC. Many of his clients are international fighters from the likes of Russia, Australia, Ireland, Germany, and Canada. It is a far cry from picking cotton with his family in the farmlands of California. "I always look back," Duran said. "Being Chicano, and growing up in the San Joaquin Valley. But here I am. Now I go to Germany every two or three months."

In boxing, Stitch's reputation as an excellent cut man travels well. He is hired by individual fighters that have either seen, or heard of his stellar patch work. But Duran's responsibilities with the UFC are more complicated.

In the UFC Duran is a company man, he is not employed by the fighters like he is in boxing. When Duran met Dana White, the owner of the Ultimate Fighting Championship, they were both struggling trainers trying to make a living in Las Vegas. Once White became the owner of the Ultimate Fighting Championship, he approached Duran at a K-1 kickboxing event at the Bellagio with an offer to join Leon Tabbs, another well respected cut man, as the only two cut men in the company.

Before Duran came around, Tabbs was the one and only cut man that worked with the UFC since its inception in 1991. There are now a total of four cut men with the UFC including Tabbs and Duran.

UFC fighters are not required to have the UFC employed cut men work their corner. But since it is a fairly new business, Duran says that most of the fighters willingly accept his help. According to Duran, about ninety nine percent of the fighters at a UFC event use the services of a UFC employed cut man. About eighty percent of the fighters ask the UFC cut men to wrap their hands before bouts.

The art of tending to a cut is done differently in all combat sports by different cut men that have their own theories. Duran thinks that fighters and trainers in the UFC are willing to accept new methods. Whereas some boxing trainers come from the old school, a culture that emphasizes on learning the ropes from the hard knocks of yesteryear. In boxing, Duran says that it is hard to teach old dogs new tricks.

The most recent and clearest example of the revolution of working cuts in the UFC as opposed to boxing was evident in Manny Pacquiao's fight against Antonio Margarito last month. Pacquiao made Margarito's face look like a cyclone by the middle rounds and Duran says that there are methods to help prevent such madness.

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"The techniques we use in the UFC are the best. It's funny, when Margarito fought Pacquiao, I got about four calls from people asking me about why this particular cut man was doing what he was doing. You know, I have studied the game of being a cut man. I mean, I have produced a video and I have probably worked thousands of cuts to this point now. So I know the game. These guys in boxing do not want to be taught. And they don't really want to teach either. As a matter of fact when I was learning, I remember going to the James Bonecrusher Smith vs. Marvis Frazier fight. This one particular cut man was doing an excellent job. After the fight, I asked him about some of his practices, and his application, and he cussed me out and told me that he is going to take it to his grave. He made me feel horrible. In the same token, that mentality still has not changed in boxing."

The approach to handling cuts is only a portion of Duran's frustrations with boxing. He feels like some of the cut men in the sport have not changed with the times. Cleanliness is of concern. According to Duran, cut men that do not wear gloves or put swabs in their mouths, or on their ears, are using techniques that should have been improved as the game progressed. But they are still done constantly.

Then there is the enswell.

"You see guys applying the enswell incorrectly all of the time," Duran said. "What they try to do is rub the mouse out of the way. But what you are doing is moving that blood clot to the side, to tissue that is not damaged, which is creating a greater problem. The proper technique is to apply cold direct pressure. And the process behind that is to close up the blood vessels that are leaking. You get swelling when blood vessels pop up underneath the skin and they are not going anywhere. So when you get hit, they keep swelling and swelling."

For us less educated folks, Duran spoke of the famous "cut me Mick" scene in Rocky one when a vision-impaired Balboa asks his trainer to cut open his closed eye so he could see.

Duran says, "In theory, you don't normally do that. But when there is an accumulation of blood, you could cut it, and you would see blood leak. But the proper way of preventing damage and stopping blood from flowing is to apply cold direct pressure. These guys don't do that. They just beat the hell out of the guys' cheek or eye brow. You'll notice it next time you see a fight."

Duran saw another example of bad cut management on Michael Katsidis, during the Marquez vs. Katsidis fight on November 27th. The brawling Katsidis has a well known history of acquiring bad cuts throughout his career. It is safe to argue that some of those cuts have prevented him from fighting at top form. Duran watched that fight closely and unfortunately witnessed plenty of mistakes by Katsidis' cut man, particularly with the way he was using the swab.

Katsidis' long time cut man is Nonito Donaire Sr. the father of bantamweight champion Nonito Donaire Jr. Duran explained that when a fighter is bleeding from the nose, most cut men use a nasal solution called adrenalin chloride 1:1000. When Donaire Sr. was applying the solution, to Katsidis' nose, Duran noticed some flaws.

"The cut man put the swab in the guys (Katsidis) nose. And he is turning it like butter number

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one. And when he did that, it probably busted a blood vessel inside the nostril. How many times have you gotten cut, applied direct pressure, and it stops bleeding? Well, those are the same theories. But now you are using a medication (adrenalin chloride 1:1000) that is supposed to work as a constrictor. When you apply that on the cut or a blood vessel, the theory is that the blood vessel is supposed to close. But this guy was turning it like butter and he was just creating more damage. But then he gets that blood swab that looks like a tampon, and he puts it back in his mouth."

Duran made it a point to state that UFC cut men wear gloves, and when they use an enswell they apply direct pressure, and do not put swabs in their mouth or near their ears. This is a formula that Duran personally established for the cut men in the UFC and he uses it with all of his boxers as well.

When using his system, Duran says that cut men do not have any problem working multiple cuts. But he still has trouble relaying that message to 'old boxing guys.'

In all fairness, Duran thinks most fighters do not know the difference between good and bad cut men. And he has a point, unless there is a bad cut or swelling during a bout, most fight fans do not think twice about how well a cut man is applying Vaseline on one's face.

"There are no schools for this," Duran said. "I get emails all the time from people that want to learn more about what I do. But they do not understand that it is years and years and years of hard working, and not making money. But like I said, I have made videos, and written a book about handling cuts. I am willing to sit down and educate anybody that wants to learn. "

When working a corner, Duran cannot help but to feel for his fighter. Mentally he goes into the bout as if the fighter is one of his kids and he is there to take care of them. There has to be a bond, he says. Anytime blood is drawn, and Duran could help, he feels a connection.

Meanwhile the fighters come to him for healing. But more importantly, they come to him for confidence. Duran worked with Andre Ward during his most recent fight on November 27th against Sakio Bika.

The Oakland native injured a knuckle on his right hand while training and it had bothered him leading up to the fight. On the night before the bout, Ward decided to have Duran practice wrap his hand to see how it would feel. The moment Duran arrived to Ward's hotel room, the champion began telling him about the injury.

"After hearing him tell me about the injury, I knew that it became a psychological thing," Duran said. "So I went into Andre's room and I wrapped his hands, and made some adjustments here and there. When I finished wrapping his hands, he started hitting, and it felt good. In doing that the night before, I took away that mental pressure. In the dressing room on fight night, I wrapped his hands again. While he was warming up, and doing pads, I asked; 'How does your hand feel?' and he said, 'I forgot about it.'

Duran asked Ward about the hand after the fight as well, and Ward had said that he did not

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even think about it. "Those are some of the things that you have to do as a cut man. It is not only the physical aspect, there is a mental game."

Pain is in the mind. In order for cut men to earn an honest pay, the fighters have to trust them. It is Duran's goal to take away the disadvantage of a cut or swelling. But he is disheartened by the cut men who continue to make mistakes or get lured into making mistakes.

There are roughly sixty seconds in between every round. Duran knows how to stretch the clock. When the bell sounds, Duran walks towards the center of the ring and is applying pressure before the fighter even sits down. They give him sixty seconds, he uses about fifty five. For Duran it is all about positioning.

"When a fighter gets cut, the primary position of a cut man is to go inside the ring. The cut man switches positions with the trainer so he could have direct contact with the fighter. Well, you'll see a lot of trainers that do not want to do that. The trainers will not move out of the ring for whatever the reason may be. It does not make sense. The cut man should get the priority position."

There have been times where a fighter is cut on the right side and the cut man stands on the left side of the corner, awkwardly reaching across the face. Duran calls those situations unprofessional and detrimental to a fighter's well being. For a cut man, Duran says that it is all about knowing what you do, and working with a good team.

"When you get a cut or have swelling that becomes the top priority. The fighter could still listen to the trainers' instructions without making eye contact with him. Next time you watch a fight, you are going to study it a little bit harder and be like, Damn, he was right."

Jacob "Stitch" Duran will be flying to Kazakhstan to work the corner of light heavyweight contender Beibut Shumenov on January 8th. Duran's book "From the Field to the Garden" can be purchased on Amazon.com. It chronicles Duran's childhood growing up as a farmer to his ascension to the top of the fighting world.

[Comment on this article](#)

joey3fingers says:

test theboxingforum.com

Radam G says:

Nice, nice piece, Fightscribe RayMark. You really got on your weaving of a masterpiece on and LET Jacob Duran slap up himself, be petty and the great master attacking the ancient behavior of old school kick-arse -- BOXING. But than again, this is the hurt bitnezz and it doesn't just apply to the boxers. I'm not going to tell you the meaning of Jacob in Hebrew and why the

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Prophet Jacob got a beatdown by an angel and was forced to change his name to Isra-el. Wow! Da UFC Stitch man took a lot of unfair shots at boxing cutmen because of one bad experience. Maybe the dude should attend a boxing clinic. Perhaps one of the world-wide tour ones of the Great Boxing Guru Manny Steward. The greatest pure cutman of all times is the late, great Chuck Bodak. The greatest pound for pound cutman of any times is Angie Dundee. Stitch is full of bullshyt. Nonito Donairey Sr is a fine cut man. One of the BEST nowadays! And it ain't a single UFC cutman who is better than most of the boxing ones. Let me stay away from naming names. But Jacob Duran should quit! Talking about applying the profession and pressure wrong, let me remind him of the Fernando Vargas bout against Sugar Shane Mosley. The bout was STOPPED because the Stitch man fudged up and caused one of the blood vessels to break in a slight cut over El-Feroz's eye. The bout was stopped because of the swelling that Jacob, the UFC expert cutman could not control. Maybe he just had a bad night. All cutmen may just have bad nights. There is no reason to call the hurt business ones metathesiophobic. Nothing under the sun is new. All that is old is new again. And all that new will be old again. Wow! Nothing personal, but the UFC and its cohorts are quite rhabodophobic. The art of boxing -- the whole deal -- casts many long shadows over UFC. UFC apparently has a pugilitic sciaphobia. And I'm standing by that. You never hear high officials of the U.S. Coast Guard talking rudely about the U.S.Navy and the U.S. Army don't that to the U.S. Marines Corp. Only in mano-i-mano combat do you have smack and syet talking. Wow! And most people don't believe pundits of man-to-man combat are just like the dang politicians. Holla!

rwynn says:

Very good story. But you are right. There are no perfect cut men period. these guys all have their tricks. I think Pacquiaos cut man is a bad ass, especially after his work during the second Marquez fight.

Ray Markarian says:

Thanks, I learned a lot from Stitch when we spoke on that day. It changes the way you watch the game when talking to guys like that. I felt like we could have talked for hours.