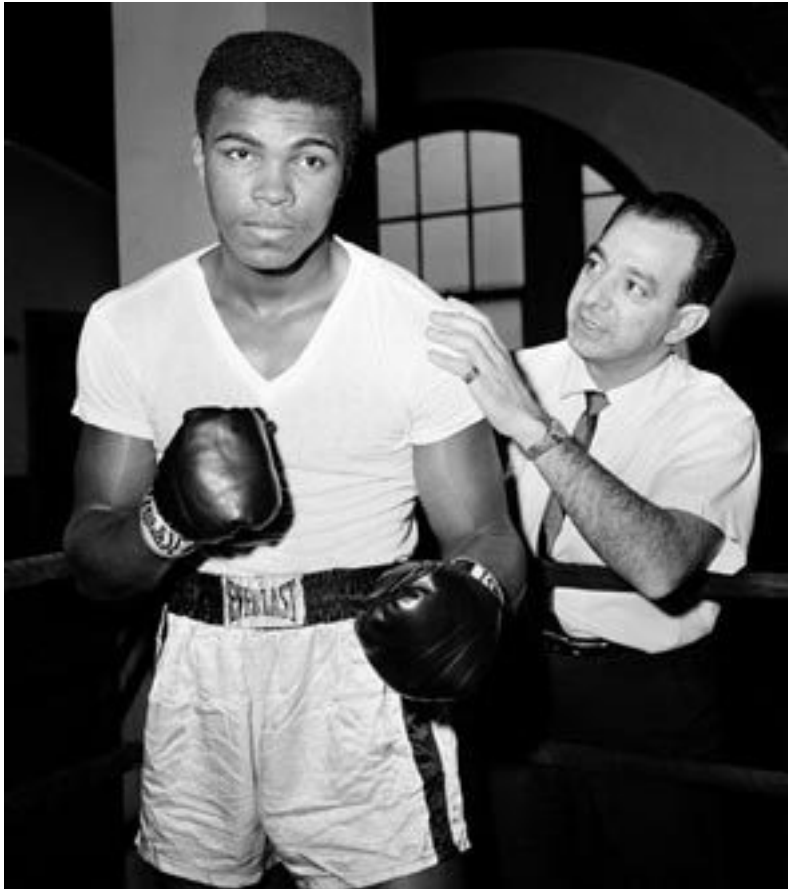


Angelo Dundee (1921-2012)

Written by Thomas Hauser
Wednesday, 01 February 2012 23:37



An important piece of boxing history has receded into the past. Angelo Dundee died on Wednesday at age ninety.

Dundee worked with fifteen world champions during the course of his career. The first was Carmen Basilio. Angelo served as his cutman.

“My brother Chris hooked me up with Carmen,” Angelo recalled years later. “The first time I met him, he scared the hell out of me. He said, ‘I just want you to know, I cut easily.’ That’s the last thing a cutman wants to hear. And he was right.”

Dundee was in Sugar Ray Leonard’s corner for most of the fighter’s professional career. His motivational words (“You’re blowing it, son”) were widely credited with spurring Leonard to victory in his epic 1981 bout against Thomas Hearns.

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But Dundee will be best remembered for his work as Muhammad Ali's trainer. Angelo was 36 years old in 1957 when they met for the first time. Ali (then Cassius Clay) was fifteen. Years later, Dundee recounted their initial encounters:

"I was in Louisville with Willie Pastrano to fight John Holman, who was a pretty good banger. We were in the hotel watching television when the phone rang. It was this kid saying, 'Mr. Dundee, my name is Cassius Marcellus Clay; I'm the Golden Gloves champion of Louisville, Kentucky.' And he gave me a long list of championships he was planning to win, including the Olympics and the heavyweight championship of the world, and then he said he wanted to come up to the room to meet us. I put my hand over the mouthpiece and said to Willie, 'There's a nut on the phone; he wants to meet you.' Willie said, 'What the heck; there's nothing good on television.' So a few minutes later, the kid was in our room with his brother, Rudy. Both of them were handsome well-mannered boys. Mostly we talked about boxing, and they stayed for three or four hours."

"Then, in 1959, Willie and I were back in Louisville for a fight against Alonzo Johnson. This time, Cassius came to the gym and asked if he could spar with Willie. I don't like pros sparring with amateurs. It's a good way to get someone hurt. But Willie was willing, and I figured why not let them go a round. Cassius was seventeen. Willie was a professional on his way to winning the light-heavyweight championship of the world. And I gotta tell you, Cassius won that round. So when Bill Faversham [head of the Louisville Syndicate that managed Clay early in his professional career] called in December 1960, I was well acquainted with Cassius Clay. Faversham came down to Miami with some of his partners to interview me. I liked them. They were satisfied with the training program I had in mind. Then it was time to talk money. They gave me a choice: \$125 a week guaranteed or ten percent off the top. I took the guarantee, which wasn't the smartest move I've made in my life; although after the second Liston fight, we worked out a percentage deal. Anyway, once the money was set, I suggested waiting until after Christmas and then bringing Cassius to Miami to train. That was fine with them. But ten minutes later, they called back and told me, 'Listen, the kid wants to come to Miami now. He wants to fight. He says when he's fighting every day is Christmas.'"

As for Ali's memories, long after the glory years had passed, The Greatest said simply, "Angelo Dundee was with me from my second professional fight. And no matter what happened after that, he was always my friend. He never interfered with my personal life. There was no bossing, no telling me what to do and not do, in or out of the ring. He was there when I needed him and he always treated me with respect. There just wasn't any problem ever between us."

All of us should have such a long and full life.

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[Comment on this article](#)

Condor says:

Oh man. It seems like I just heard him on a morning radio show I listen to in Tampa (where he's beloved). Even though the show's hosts know boxing very minimally, they always marvel at Angelo. His segment was always too short (everyone would say geez, I wish he was staying on longer). Angelo was just such a compelling figure and lived an absolutely incredible life. RIP Angelo Dundee.

dino da vinci says:

I'm deeply saddened by the loss of Ange.

mortcola says:

A great teacher, a living, breathing icon of the sweet science, has left the ring. RIP, Ange.

the Roast says:

R.I.P. Angelo Dundee, a true boxing icon. I was too young for Ali but I will NEVER forget "You're blowin it son, you're blowin it!"

GANZ says:

Very Sad Day...10 bells for Ange, R.I.P.

Radam G says:

Wow! No word do I have for this lost. _____ Ditto the 10 bells fro Ganz. Holla!

brownsugar says:

One of my favorite guys in boxing, Dundee was the prototype, the consummate trainer, so far ahead of his time his methods and values inside and out of the ring will never go out of style.

GANZ says:

Amazing trainer, ring tactician, strategist and motivator. He invented ways to stretch every rule to give his fighters an edge. Great ambassador for the sport. Legendary.

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