Written by David A. Avila
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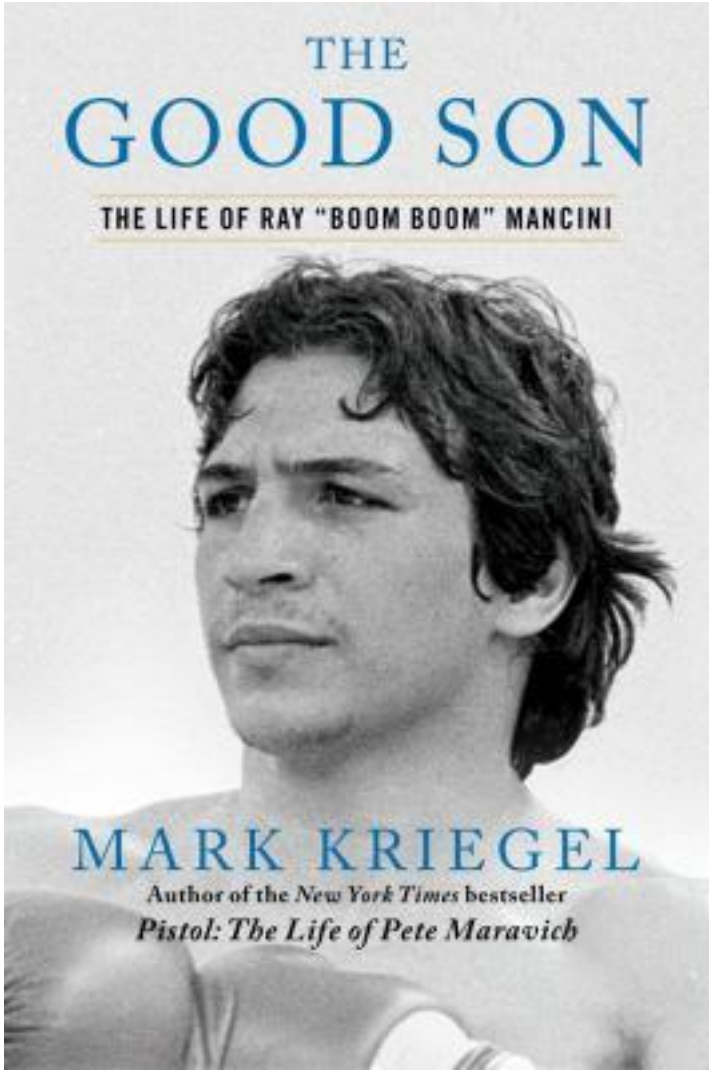

Not too long ago Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini roamed the lightweight division with the likes of Hector "Macho" Camacho, Bobby "Schoolboy" Chacon and Alexis Arguello as part of the murderer's row that he engaged.

It was the 1980s and Mancini arrived as explosive as his fists on the boxing scene. In and out of the boxing ring the Italian-American from Youngstown, Ohio represented class and dignity along with a world championship belt earned through some of the most brutal battles in the boxing ring.

One of my favorite biographers of this century, Mark Kriegel, has written with his usual aplomb a great story depicting the journey of this American hero. The book is called "The Good Son: The Life of Ray "Boom, Boom" Mancini."

Mancini will be appearing at the Golden Boy Promotions show on Friday Nov. 9, at the Fantasy Springs Casino in Indio, signing autographs.

Kriegel, the author, has spent a career working as a columnist and watching the heroes and villains of sports. He wrote books on the mega star wattage of Broadway Joe Namath to the basketball court artistry of Pistol Pete Maravich.

This is Kriegel's first venture into boxing, a sport he knows thoroughly through years of watching first hand as Manny Pacquiao, Oscar De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather performed their handicraft before millions.

Mancini offers a different type of boxer from a different era when the sport of pugilism could be seen regularly on the regular television networks. Pay-per-view television was in its infancy and did not have a stranglehold on the mega fights as it does today. Boxing was a form of entertainment for the masses before the 1990s.

The author captures that period in prizefighting when someone like Mancini could be groomed with methodical precision to become a world champion. It was also a period when the East Coast, primarily New York City, still held an iron grip on the sport and a fellow with the right management could breeze through the trap doors if he had the right stuff. Mancini had that kind of talent.

Kriegel always provides the flavor and atmosphere thick with language and smoke of his subject's storyline. It's one of his many strong points and one necessary to capture this film noir era of boxing, especially when telling the story of the first "Boom Boom," the father Lenny Mancini, who also boxed and was a contender.

It's a story that's ripe for a movie especially when Kriegel paints with words the father's life from beginning to end. If you don't know the story of the first "Boom Boom" well he was the first version and fought during the 1930s and 1940s and became a contender for the world title. World War II ended that dream and injuries sustained during a battle further impeded his dream.

It's the dream and the next generation of "Boom Boom" that this story is about including an epic trail of wins against Chacon, Art Frias, Jose Luis Ramirez and the tragedy of Deuk-Koo Kim.

Even Mancini's losses were magnificent and held fans spellbound whether it was live at the arena or on television.

Kriegel's book captures the tones and emotions that Mancini cultivated whenever he laced up those gloves. People that went to those ring wars alongside the 135-pound warrior give their testaments in honest and sincere fashion. It's an important biography in the world of prizefighting and one that boxing fans need to know about.

For more information on the Friday casino card, where Mancini will appear, contact the casino at (800) 827-2946.

To purchase the book "The Good Son: The Life and Ray "Boom, Boom" Mancini" you can go to Amazon.com or Barnes & Noble.

Comment on this article

Radam G says:

Purchase it, guys! You will learn some things that you never thought of. Holla!

the Roast says:

Well if we put down the rose colored glasses and pick up the Roast colored glasses it looks like this. I saw all of Mancini's fights. To say Bobby Chacon was a shell of himself would be an understatement. He was a shell of a shell. Completly shot and out of his weight class. Ray fought Camacho when they were both near the end, and lost. Arguello beat the hell out of Boom Boom. Ray was very over rated. White guy with a good back story. Made for TV. Thats how I remember it.

brownsugar says:

[QUOTE=the Roast;21969]Well if we put down the rose colored glasses and pick up the Roast colored glasses it looks like this. I saw all of Mancini's fights. To say Bobby Chacon was a shell of himself would be an understatement. He was a shell of a shell. Completly shot and out of his weight class. Ray fought Camacho when they were both near the end, and lost. Arguello beat the hell out of Boom Boom. Ray was very over rated. White guy with a good back story. Made for TV. Thats how I remember it.[/QUOTE]

Hilarious.... Roast you should visit open mic night at the comedy club sometime.
Mancini had that wholesome good guy appeal.
A winning smile, and used his WWII veteran dad as his motivation for winning.
He also inspired several good fighters from Youngstown to follow in his footsteps.
After his hard fought losses to Bramble and Arguello we knew had reached the ceiling of his boxing career. Hero might be too strong of a word to describe Boom Boom. But he was game and entertaining while it lasted.

Radam G says:

Danggit! The Roast, that was a coldhearted post. Did a Milan nun smack you for dame, damsel and doll watching with the wrong eye, or something? Don't be doing that left-eyed sneak peek jive. Haha! Nuns will fudge you up for lefty syet. Use da right eye, da right hand and da right foot. And if you get on yo' nasty, da right nut. Hehehe!

Dude, nuns don't play. And they will make you pay. Did I ever tell you how they fudged up lefty teen Radam in Jesuit boring -- I mean boarding -- school in Hong kong? Hahaha! Holla!

the Roast says:

Just calling it as I remember seeing it B-Sug and RG. Mancini was game and came to fight. He was great against Arturo Frias and other ill fated lesser lights but when Boom2 met talented boxers he got pounded. Livingstone Bramble made his name off Boom2. Gatti would have left Ray in a crumpled heep most likely. Its all good.

gibola says:

I don't think anybody's claiming Mancini was a great fighter. But he was a great personality, with a great story and an exciting style - who was there at the perfect time to be seen by most of the US, that is why people felt involved with his career and why people will want to read the book today. Better fighters than Mancini didn't have any of that and that's why nobody outside of hardcore boxing fans remember them and why you're unlikely to see publishers rush to print Jimmy Paul's book. We should celebrate what Mancini did for the sport and look back fondly on an era when boxing mattered to the average sports fan.

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Nailed it!

the Roast says:

Good points Gibola. The key line of the article is,"groomed with methodical precison." It was a different time, a different era. My main thing was the Chacon fight. It was a farce. And I'm sure Jimmy Paul had an interesting life. Most fighters do.