

THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2017

DAILY NEWS

# GOLDEN GLOVES

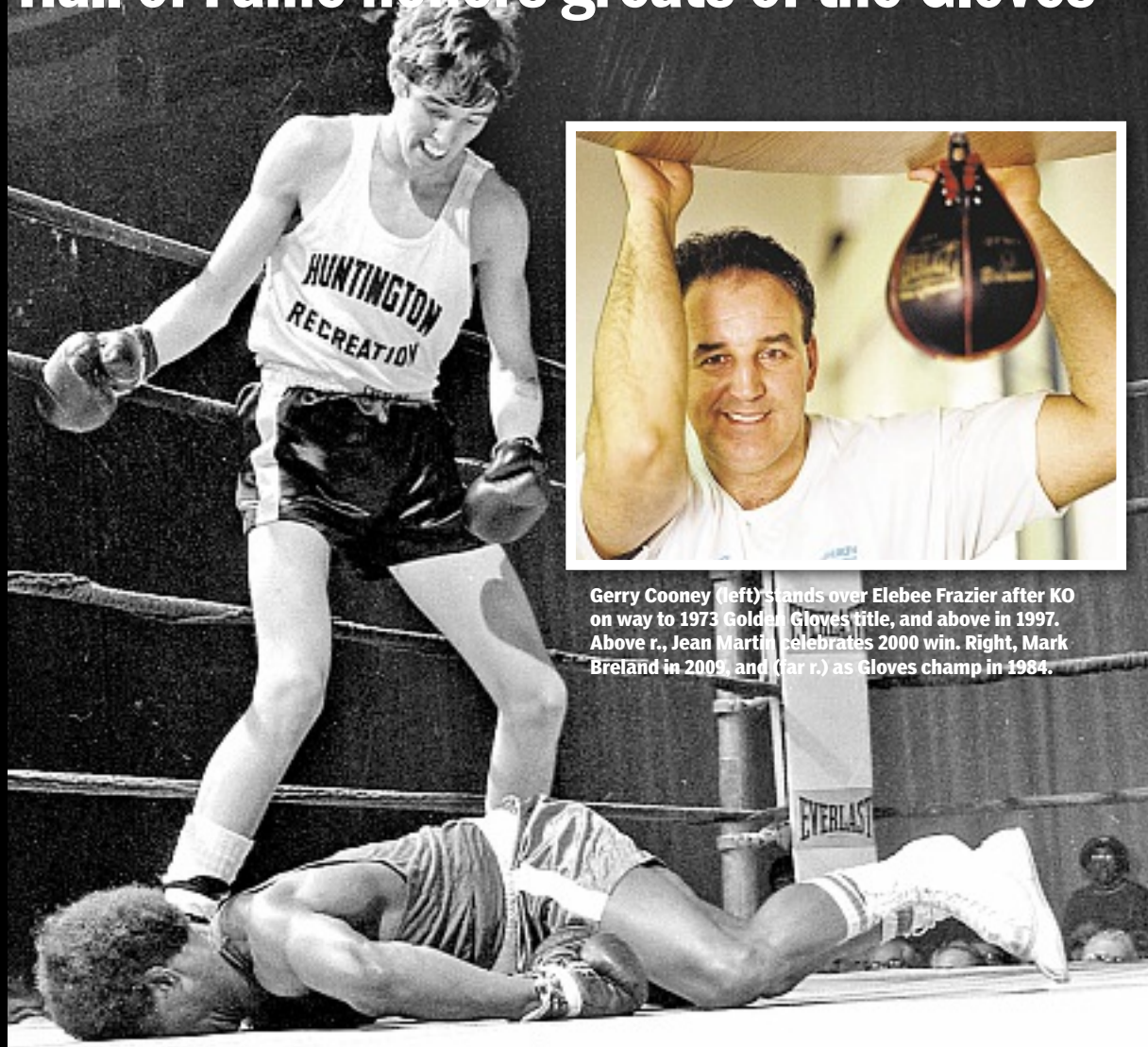


# HALL OF FAME

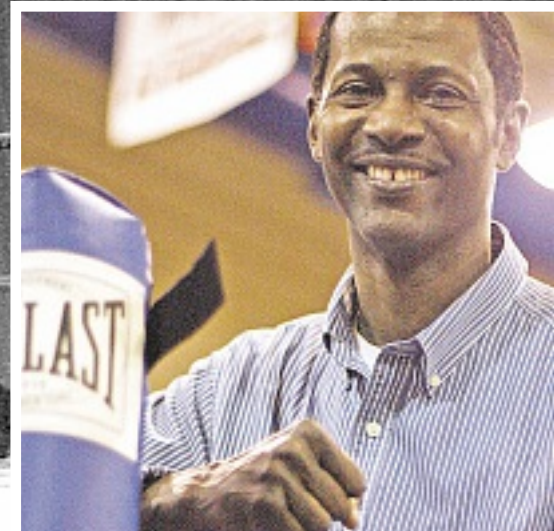
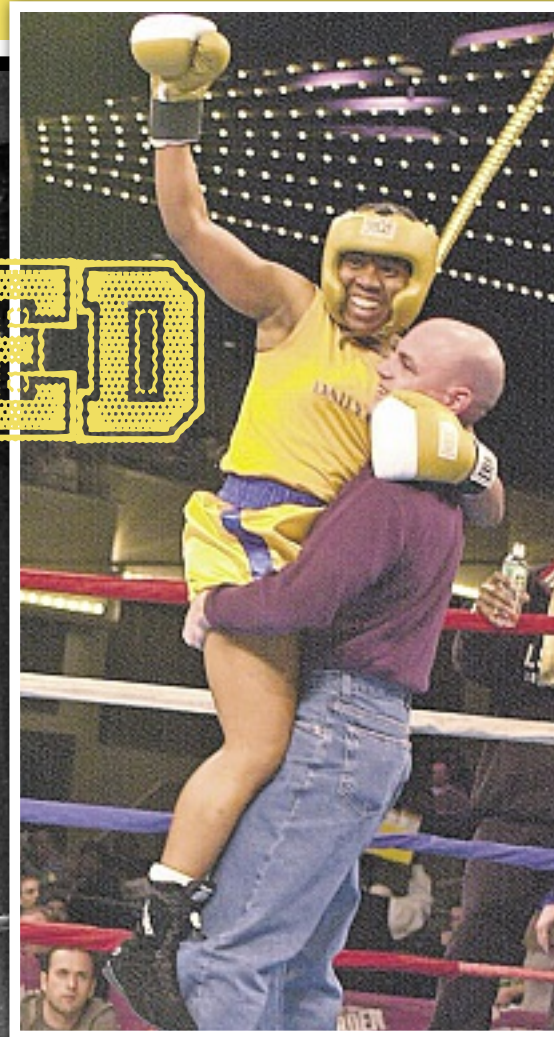
# GOLDEN GLOVES

# RING FEATS REMEMBERED

## Hall of Fame honors greats of the Gloves



Gerry Cooney (left) stands over Elebe Frazier after KO on way to 1973 Golden Gloves title, and above in 1997. Above r., Jean Martin celebrates 2000 win. Right, Mark Breland in 2009, and (far r.) as Gloves champ in 1984.



**BY EVAN SMITH**  
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

**T**HE DAILY NEWS Golden Gloves tournament is one of the most prestigious amateur sporting events in the world.

To win the coveted Golden Gloves necklace is an extraordinary feat, an accomplishment that few achieve.

"It was the proudest moment of my life, walking through my neighborhood with the Golden Gloves around my neck," Tommy Gallagher once said of winning the Daily News Golden Gloves in 1959.

The News launched the Golden Gloves Hall of Fame in 2014 to help keep alive the memories of those who only had dreams of being mentioned in the same

breath as boxing legends like Sugar Ray Robinson, Floyd Patterson and Mark Breland.

The majority of these young men and women do not go on to compete on a professional level; instead they use the Golden Gloves as a measuring stick for self-control and self-respect.

The Hall of Fame is still in its early years, which means there are a wealth of boxers who need to be acknowledged. "It's special because it's new. We're still in the cream of the crop," said Bruce Silverglade, a member of the selection committee. "These are the best of the best over the course of 90 years. These are some really meaningful awards."

The inaugural class was easy to identify — the names are proof: Robinson,

Patterson and Breland, Howard Davis Jr., Lou Salica, Nick and Pete Spanakos, Vince Shomo, Davey Vasquez, Sean Daughtry, Jean Martin and Ronald McCall.

Breland is impressed by the breadth of different styles that fighters display in the tournament.

"You have guys who were very crafty boxers, knockout artists, guys who were slick, it's something where they should be known for what they've done," said Breland. "It meant a lot to me to be inducted because it's something people can see later on."

"It meant the world to me to be inducted with all these great fighters. It was a great honor," said Martin. "I thought people had forgotten about me, and that

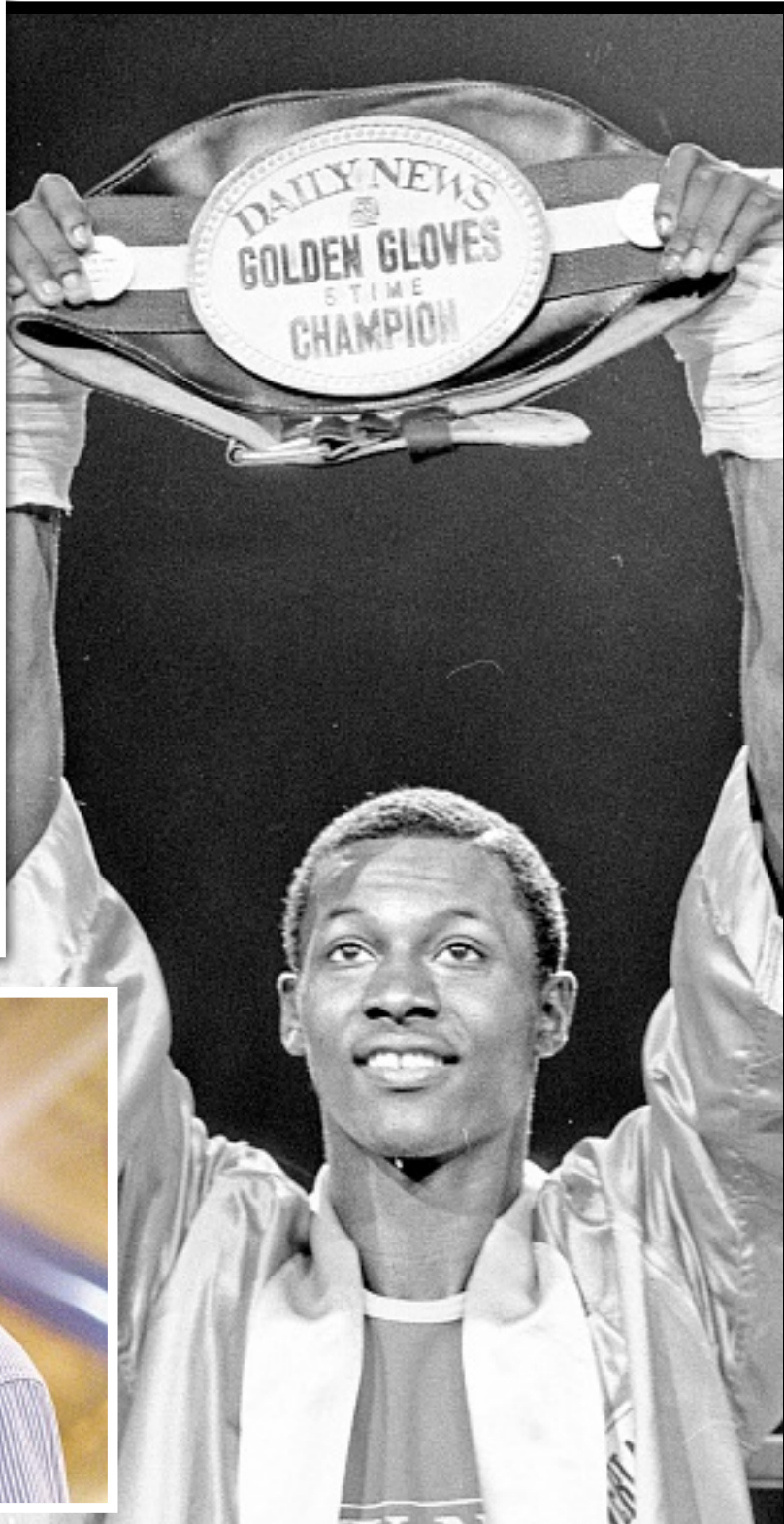
it was over with and long done with. To be called back seven years later, I was like, 'Wow, people remember me.' I can't believe it. It's nice to know that what you accomplished in the past will be remembered in the future."

This year's Golden Gloves title fights will be held Friday at Hammerstein Ballroom and Saturday at Aviator Sports and Events Center at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn. The 2017 Hall of Fame class will be inducted in the ring Friday night between bouts.

"To be honored and to be put into the Golden Gloves Hall of Fame is an amazing experience. To be acknowledged with those great fighters is remarkable," said two-time Gloves champ and pro heavyweight Gerry Cooney. "It's a big honor.

GOLDEN GLOVES VINCENT RIEHL, DAN FARRELL, THOMAS MONASTER, TODD MAISEL/DAILY NEWS; KEN GOLDFIELD

# GOLDEN GLOVES



The ceremony is during a Golden Gloves night, so not only to see the guys coming up after you, but also to see the guys who were before your time and during your time – it's a nice feather in our caps to have had those experiences."

"The Hall of Fame gives the audience a chance to share those memories," said Golden Gloves Director Brian Adams.

"It's to send a message to the next generation. Professional boxing has suffered because a lot of the young kids don't stick around and work on their craft in the amateurs. They don't build their name. They win one or two tournaments and then they turn pro. They don't get a chance to establish themselves. Maybe the Hall of Fame will entice kids to stay around a little longer. If you win three, four, or five

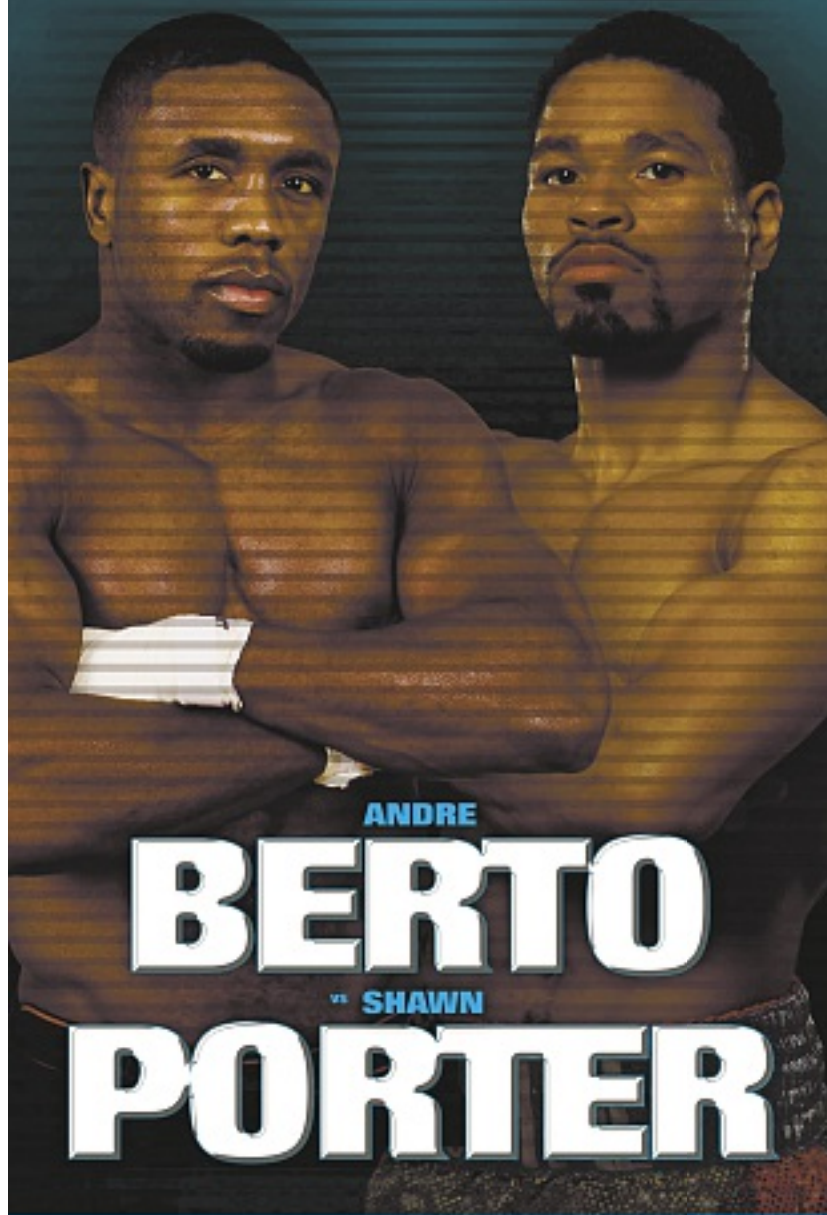
titles there's a greater chance to be inducted into the Hall of Fame," Adams said.

"The ceremony gives them a chance to be recognized. It's amazing," added Golden Gloves Historian Bill Farrell. "To have that recognition is a symbol that they were worthy of this. They climb up those steps and climb through those ropes and come into the center of the ring, are introduced and presented with a Hall of Fame robe and their plaque. To be under the lights again, that's what they live for. It's one more moment for them to treasure and reflect. It puts it all in a bow."

In these pages, meet some of the great champions of the past – the Daily News Golden Gloves Hall of Fame Class of 2017.

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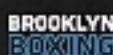


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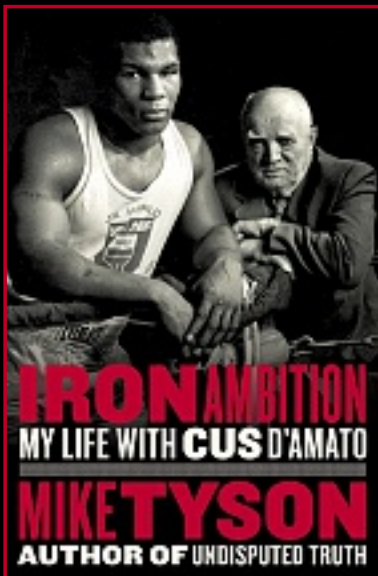


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GOLDEN GLOVES

# GOLDEN GLOVES



Brian Adams in the ring in 1990s and now as director of the Golden Gloves.



## HE'LL ALWAYS BE A BOXER AT HEART

Gloves boss Adams found way to give back

BY EVAN SMITH  
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

**B**EFORE BRIAN ADAMS was director of the Daily News Golden Gloves, he was a competitor.

Adams made his presence known in the 132-pound weight class in the early '90s. The New York native reached five straight finals, capturing three Golden Gloves titles. He had a remarkable skill set, paired with strong in-ring savvy.

"He had a thoughtful approach to the tournament. He was a fast and very slick boxer with some pop. He could put you down," said Golden Gloves historian Bill Farrell. "He was kind of like a protégé of Mark Breland when he was coming up. He was well-schooled."

Adams received that schooling at the New Bed-Stuy Boxing Gym in Brooklyn, a hotbed for upcoming boxing talent. It was under the tutelage of venerable trainer George Washington that Adams grew into a polished pugilist.

"New Bed-Stuy was a very popular gym. It was just ironic that it was in my neighborhood," Adams said. "George focused on what he had to do with us in the gym. He focused on what we had to do, but that we have to be responsible for whatever we do."

Adams also received guidance at the gym from Breland, a five-time Golden Gloves champ.

"Mark was a champion, but also your everyday, average person," Adams said. "He was someone that you could talk to. That kept me grounded."

Adams won his first Golden Gloves title in 1993 a year after he reached the finals and lost. He reached the finals again in 1994, but lost a highly controversial decision. It was the last time that his sister would see him fight — she lost her battle with lupus that year.

"I took seven months off. I had no

interest in really boxing again," said Adams. "When I came back, I came back as focused as I was in 1993 and 1994."

Adams was competing in the USA National Boxing Championships as well as the Golden Gloves, and a scheduling conflict that year presented him with a tough decision.

"I had to fight Monday through Thursday in Colorado for the Nationals, and Saturday was the (Golden Gloves) finals. We had an off-day on Friday. I came back home to fight Golden Gloves," Adams said. "I lost in Colorado, but won in New York."

The following year, 1996, was the last time the 132-pound defending champ competed in the tournament. He added one more Golden Gloves title before moving on to fight professionally.

Adams, of course, is now back in his natural environment. As director of the Golden Gloves, he takes great joy in giving back, extending the opportunity once provided to him. He wants to keep the rich legacy of the tournament alive.

"The Golden Gloves has been special to people before my time. For all the people of tomorrow, it's going to give them motivation," Adams said. "I'm director of the tournament, but I'm a boxer at heart."

Adams said he is honored to be inducted into the Hall of Fame among an elite class of boxers.

"I got into this to be the best that I can be, and not to be labeled the best," he said. "I sincerely think when athletes start thinking about history, then they lose what they are trying to accomplish. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter what you think you are, because someone will always have an opinion on your position. But it's important to know that you put everything into it."

Adams did put everything he had into it — and as a result, he is being inducted into the 2017 class of the Golden Gloves Hall of Fame.

JAMES KEIYOMI, HOWARD SIMMONS/DAILY NEWS

# HALL OF FAME

**BY EVAN SMITH**  
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

**A**LICIA ASHLEY always envisioned life as a dancer. But a devastating knee injury altered those plans, moving her life out of the dance studio and into the ring. And what seemed like a curse would turn out to be a blessing for Ashley, who became one of the most prolific female boxers in Daily News Golden Gloves tournament history.

"I wanted to be a professional dancer. I was dancing six to eight hours a day," Ashley said. "When I tore my meniscus it totally curtailed my dancing."

After the injury, Ashley finished her degree in computer systems at Baruch College — then turned to her oldest brother, Devon, for advice. Knowing that she wanted to stay in shape, he suggested martial arts.

"My brother is a black belt and always wanted me to get into karate," she said.

Ashley tried karate and kickboxing.

"My first kickboxing fight was

against a boxer. In kickboxing, you only have to kick eight times and then you don't have to kick anymore," Ashley said. "Basically, they would always tell the person to get those kicks off, and then they would box. Whenever my opponent would get on the inside, I didn't know what to do. After that fight, I was like, 'I have to get my hands better.' That's when I got into boxing, to get my hands better for kickboxing. Then, I found out I really enjoyed boxing."



"Once I was in boxing, I loved the strategy of it. For me, it's more than just punching the person. It's about controlling where the fight goes."

The 2017 Hall of Fame inductee views boxing like dancing. "It's always a performance. It's enjoying the audience."

Ashley won three consecutive Golden Gloves titles in the 125-pound division, from 1996 through 1998.

"The Golden Gloves had a certain prestige to it," she said. "I would come to the gym in the morning before work and then train afterwards, prior to going home. There was a certain discipline in the training."

Ashley went on to have a tremendous professional career, capturing five world titles. She credits the Golden Gloves for preparing her for many of the boxing styles she'd see as a pro.

"Back then, you never knew who you were fighting," she said. "Fighting in the Golden Gloves really helped me because there were all different types of fighters."

Now 49, Ashley is still boxing. She is the oldest woman to hold a world title. She attributes her longevity in the sport to her slick, graceful style. "I don't get hit. It's my style," she said. "I've never been knocked down. The injuries that I sustain never happen in the ring, nothing that I can attribute to boxing."

Ashley has been one of the pioneers for the Golden Gloves women's division. "I have met a lot of women who say they respect me and are inspired by me as fighter."

Ashley is also a trainer at Gleason's Gym. "I have a lot of female amateur competitors. I've had one win the Golden Gloves before and another make it to the finals. It's gratifying to share this knowledge that I have. It's not just the girls that compete in the Golden Gloves, I have all the other girls that I help in the gym. It's great watching the next generation achieve what I have done."

Alicia Ashley (also left) says, "I don't get hit. It's not my style."



## THE DANCE JUST KEEPS GOING ON

At 49, Alicia Ashley is oldest woman to hold a world title

PAT CARROLL/DAILY NEWS

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GOLDEN GLOVES

# GOLDEN GLOVES

BY EVAN SMITH  
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

**H**ERBERT KROETEN always reported for duty when it came to boxing.

A skilled boxer in the ring, Kroeten fought in the Golden Gloves while serving his country in the Coast Guard.

Not allowing World War II to deter his dreams, Kroeten captured gold in 1943 and 1944 in the middleweight division.

Kroeten spent most of his early life in Minneapolis, and attended the University of Minnesota, where he joined the college boxing team. In 1941 and 1942, he took home the Minneapolis Golden Gloves titles.

His next move would take him to New York City, where his passion for boxing grew stronger.

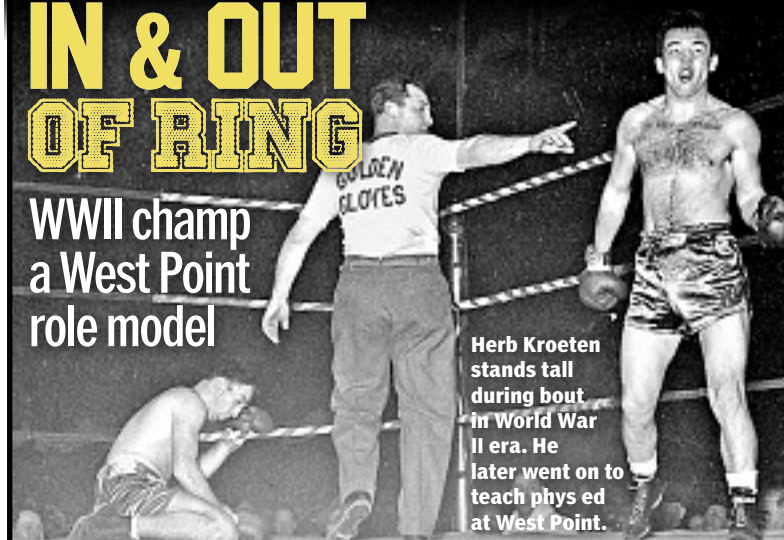
Trying to rekindle the success he experienced in Minneapolis, Kroeten signed up for the New York City Golden Gloves. In 1943, the Coast Guard cadet took home the crown in the military division, victorious in the 165-pound serviceman's weight class.

"The Golden Gloves had a separate servicemen division in 1943," said Golden Gloves boxing historian Bill Farrell.

"There were so many servicemen in New York. There were Navy men at the Navy yard. There were Army guys, Coast Guard guys, Air Force guys. They had their own division because there were so many of

## ON HIS GUARD IN & OUT OF RING

WWII champ  
a West Point  
role model



Herb Kroeten stands tall during bout in World War II era. He later went on to teach phys ed at West Point.

them from all over the country."

The following year, Kroeten fought in the 175-pound open division. He would go on to win the Eastern regional tournament of champions, but would fall short in the intercity tournament.

The Golden Gloves tournament had a different format than the one that is used today.

"Before the intercity tournaments, they

had regional champions. The regional champions would then go on to fight in the intercities. They had the tournament of champions for the eastern region," explained Farrell. "Every newspaper had a Golden Gloves-type tournament. Everybody on the Eastern Seaboard would fight in the tournament of champions. The intercities tournaments were basically the national championship."

After the conclusion of World War II, Kroeten earned a master's degree in physical education. He would later receive a job offer from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point to teach boxing and physical education. Going back to his Golden Gloves roots, he would invite kids from the city to come tour the facilities.

"The intercity team would be training, he would show them around. They would have exhibitions, it was great," said Farrell.

Kroeten displayed his admiration for boxing by showing the young cadets the ropes. He ran the plebe boxing program, which is a required course that every student must take.

"He oversaw the program for 40 years. It is estimated that 3,600 West Point graduates learned how to box from Herb Kroeten. Generals, colonels and people who have run the United States army for generations all have Herb Kroeten stories to tell," said Farrell.

Kroeten would also bring the cadets that he trained at West Point to compete in the Golden Gloves tournament. There is little doubt that Kroeten, who died at 84 in 2006, had a profound impact in all different levels of boxing. His contributions to the sport and his country are immeasurable.

"He not only left his mark on the Golden Gloves, but he left his mark on the military," Farrell said. "The Hall of Fame is acknowledgement of his contribution to the Golden Gloves and the country."

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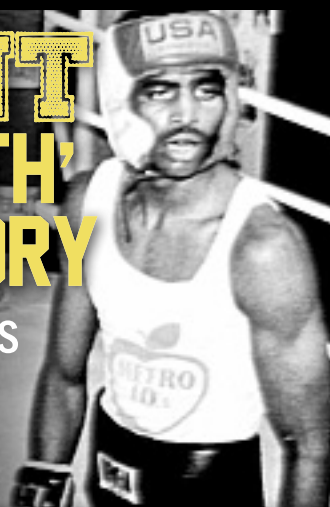
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# HALL OF FAME

## WENT 'FOURTH' TO GLORY

Repeat titles for a pure craftsman



Lionel Odom, who won four straight Golden Gloves titles in late 1980s and early '90s, was "the boxer's boxer."

ROBERT ROSAMILLO

BY EVAN SMITH  
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

**T**HOSE WHO witnessed Lionel Odom in the ring consider him one of best pure boxers the Golden Gloves tournament has ever seen.

Odom, who fought in the Gloves from 1988 to 1992, compiled an amateur record of 124-7 and took home the ultimate prize four consecutive times.

"Lionel was amazing. He had all the tools; he was like a boxing savant. He was the boxer's boxer. He could do it all. He just had the talent and nobody wanted to fight him," said Golden Gloves Historian Bill Farrell. "He could stop you, he could outbox you, he could play with you in the ring. He was remarkable to watch."

Daily News Golden Gloves Tournament Director Brian Adams shared the sentiment.

"He's the best amateur boxer that I have ever seen," Adams said. "He had a high in-ring IQ. He knew when he had to fight you and when he had to box you."

"I got involved through my brother. Everything that he wanted to do, I wanted to do too," Odom said. "He tried boxing, so I went into boxing and I fell in love with it."

When Odom was 12, he joined

the PAL. He was in the ring facing opponents within three weeks. He fought in the Junior Olympics, Kids Gloves and an assortment of other amateur tournaments that would prepare him for the Daily News Golden Gloves.

"Those tournaments took me around the world as a kid. I learned early what it was like to be involved in boxing," said Odom. "The Golden Gloves was the most prestigious tournament to be in."

But he didn't want to just be in the tournament. "I trained every day. They couldn't keep me out of the gym," Odom said. "My goal was to win it. When I got a chance to fight in it, I had to make sure I did my damage to win it all."

Odom did enough damage to pick up a remarkable four Golden Gloves titles, two in the 112-pound weight class and two in the 119-pound weight class.

The 2017 Hall of Famer preaches a philosophy of defense, moving, ducking and dodging in the ring. "I worked on my craft. Boxing is not a contact sport," he said. "The name of the game is to hit and not get hit. The more times I can limit you hitting me, that works well for me. If I hit you more times than you hit me, I win."

Odom's first Golden Gloves win was the most special to him.

He was 17, and the young phenom had his plate full with several tournaments. "Everyone was talking about winning the Golden Gloves," he said. "You win the Golden Gloves, you get your name etched in that book. I had a lot of things going on for me that year, too. I had gone out to the Nationals, I made the Olympic trials and I was in the Golden Gloves. That first tournament win of the Golden Gloves was the most memorable for me."

Odom is still involved in the Golden Gloves as a trainer at Mendez Boxing gym. He views it as a way to pass his knowledge of the sport and his experience in the tournament to the next generation of boxers, a group which includes his own kids.

"I love to give back. I tell the kids to be patient and stay relaxed," said Odom. "I'm training my kids and they're going to start competing in the amateur tournaments this summer."

The Golden Gloves community will always be family to Odom, a close-knit group that shares a common interest and bond that few can understand.

"Being inducted into the Golden Gloves Hall of Fame is a feat within itself," he said. "It's an honor. It's something that not too many people did."

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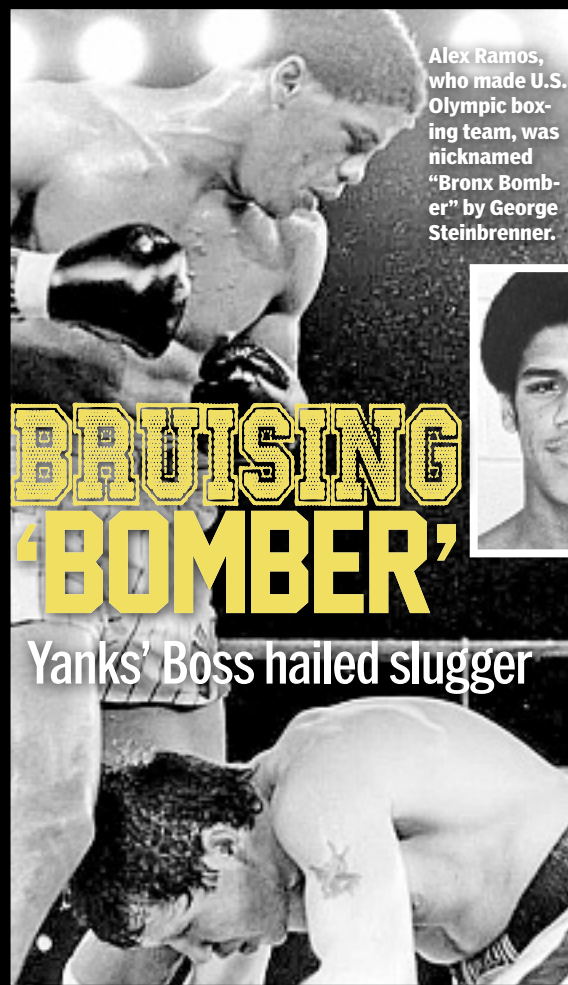
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# GOLDEN GLOVES



Alex Ramos, who made U.S. Olympic boxing team, was nicknamed "Bronx Bomber" by George Steinbrenner.

BY EVAN SMITH  
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

**N**OTTO BE confused with the New York Yankees, boxer Alex Ramos was known as the "Bronx Bomber."

The hard-hitting brawler won four Daily News Golden Gloves tournaments in an unprecedented three different weight classes — the 147-, 156-, and 165-pound divisions. His impressive amateur record was 143-15 with 132 knockouts.

Former boxing teammate and fellow 2017 Golden Gloves Hall of Fame inductee

Mike Rosario recalls how Ramos earned his nickname: "When he turned pro, he was so well-liked that George Steinbrenner bought him his first boxing robe, which had pin-stripes. They called him the Bronx Bomber because he was always knocking people out."

Ramos' knockout reputation grew as he rose through the ranks. Golden Gloves boxing historian Bill Farrell described his unusual power: "He was an incredibly strong guy. He could hit. He punched like a mule and was built like a bull.

He could put you down with one punch; he had that kind of power."

Ramos got into boxing at age 11 in 1972, growing up in the South Bronx. His first interaction with the sweet science came at the illustrious boxing trainer Gil Clancy's gym. Ramos was in awe of all of the boxers that would step foot in the gym. "Emile Griffith, Gerry Quarry, Harold Weston, Jose Fernandez, all types of great fighters. All the top-notch fighters were there," he said. "I would go every day."

The young Ramos' journey to the gym was difficult at times. His mother required that he be accompanied by two fellow teenagers to ride the subway, or she wouldn't let him go. Ramos admits now he would occasionally take the subway by himself — and that he was more fearful of the repercussions from his mom than any boxer in the ring.

"She would have had a heart attack if she found out I was going to the gym by myself," he said. "She was very passionate. I would have really got a butt-kicking if she found out."

Ramos moved on from Clancy's gym and began to work out of the fire department close to his house, then to the Bronx Chester Boxing Club and trainers Luis Camacho and Lenny Dejesus. "That was where I started to win everything," he said. "You name it, every

tournament in the world. ...

"I used to come with a friend of mine and his father to come watch Howard Davis. I used to say, 'Wow, this guy is good.' And then it was my turn. I was knocking guys out in this tournament. It was unbelievable."

Although the Bronx Bomber calls California home now, the Hall of Fame ceremony will hold a special place for Ramos because he is coming back where it all started. "It means the world to me because I love New York and that's where I come from. That I fought in New York and being inducted at home, it means so much. I really love New York."

Ramos made the U.S. boxing team, but his gold medal dreams were dashed in 1980 by the boycott of the Moscow Olympics.

"They gave me a crystal bear for being the best boxer for 1980," he said. Ramos also forged a bond with the prolific sports commentator Howard Cosell, who was a good luck charm of sorts for the powerful slugger. "Every time Howard Cosell commented my fights, I won by a first-round knockout," Ramos said. "He did a lot for me. He was great."

Ramos is still active in the boxing community. "I am helping others, I help kids," he said. "It's a big thing for me. I am still involved. To give back, there is nothing better to do ... It's out of love."



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# HALL OF FAME

BY EVAN SMITH  
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

**M**IKE ROSARIO has a lineage of boxing blood in his family; his father fought in the Daily News Golden Gloves and his mother was the nation's first female trainer.

Naturally, Rosario wanted to get involved, too. Rosario's father lost to Joe Cortez, who would go on to become a world-renowned referee. And Cortez — known for being "fair but firm" in the ring — later worked with the younger Rosario to help him prepare for the tournament.

"When I got to the Golden Gloves finals, Joe Cortez started working with me. He knew that my father always wanted to win the gloves and to my father it was like that wall that he couldn't pass," Rosario said. "Cortez came and worked with me through the Golden Gloves."

Rosario came up short in the 1976 Golden Gloves, a devastating blow to the young pugilist, who contemplated leaving the sport altogether.

"Losing in '76 taught me a big lesson. My father and I ran to one of the locker rooms where they have a sink and a mop and we cried and cried."

After a pep talk from Golden Gloves tournament director Harry Forbes, Rosario regained his motivation. He got back in the gym and worked harder than ever before. "The first year I won the Golden Gloves in 1977 was redemption because I

## POWER OF THE SON



Mom and pop helped prep champ-turned-ref

Mike Rosario makes an opponent twist and turn in 1970s bout.

beat the same person that I lost to the year before. It was a big, big deal," said Rosario. "For 365 days of the year, I was in that gym. Every single day, I trained every day. I wanted it that bad. It was dedication. I needed to win. I knew I was better than that."

Rosario, a 2017 Hall of Fame inductee,

would win the tournament two more times, all in the 106-pound division. But it's the first title that sticks with him the most. "The 1977 Golden Gloves tournament meant everything," he said. "It was blood, sweat and tears. Everything after that was just icing on the cake."

After his amateur career, Rosario

turned professional and went to the Catskills with legendary trainer Cus D'Amato. "He was a great teacher," Rosario said. "Mentally, he got you ready. It was hard for me to understand his method of training, but after being there for a month, I understood it. It prepared us a lot for the pros."

The Gloves also played a large part in helping Rosario get ready for the pro ranks.

"It was everything. The preparation of the Golden Gloves was tremendous. When you go into the pros you go in on a higher scale. People treat you a little bit better when they know you're a champion. You're going into the pros with a name. It's pride to say you're a Golden Glover. It shows you have heart and courage."

Rosario now facilitates the punches instead of throwing them. "I became an official and I traveled the world," he said. "I have been to seven different continents because of my skills as a referee. It's all about me giving back because it all started with me refereeing in the Golden Gloves. That has been my biggest honor, refereeing in the Golden Gloves for 22 years."

His work as an official allows him to relive the glory of the tournament — from a different perspective. "It's fun," he said. "It's like being back in there. The best part of it is I'm not getting hit. A boxer is a showman — they need the show, and being a referee is being part of the show. You're back where you belong, that ring — it's home."

VINCENT RIEHL/DAILY NEWS

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GOLDEN GLOVES

# GOLDEN GLOVES

## HE'S TOUGH TO THE CORPS

### Marine vet learns to do his fighting in the ring

BY EVAN SMITH  
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

**F**OR MICHAEL Polite-Coffie, boxing is just another drill.

The 30-year-old pugilist out of Bloodline MMA is a Marines Corps veteran who picked up boxing for the first time after returning from overseas.

"If you can fight over there, you can fight in the ring," said Polite-Coffie. "Over there you'll be fighting, but sometimes you can't see your enemy. At least in the ring, you know who you're going against. You can see your enemy. It's another man ... I've never really been scared of the guy across the ring from me."

Polite-Coffie feels that serving in the Marines has given him mental focus and discipline.

"The core values in the Marines are courage and commitment. You fight with honor, you don't back down — that's courage. Commitment, you commit yourself to whatever your craft is. I took those core values and put it into boxing."

Polite-Coffie started boxing a little over a year ago. He didn't have much time to prepare for his first Golden Gloves tournament. To compensate for lost time, the vet hit the gym.

"The minute I walked in the gym I told my trainer that I want to compete. He can tell you that I showed up every day, seven days a week," said Polite-Coffie. "It was two weeks before the Golden Gloves was going to start and I showed up every day. He showed me all the basic things just to try to get a jump-start because it was kind of a last-minute thing. I committed myself for those two weeks and I saw the result, which was a first-round knockout. From there I was hooked."

Polite-Coffie made it all the way to the novice division finals in the 2016 tournament before losing in a unanimous decision.

"It was a good experience. It showed me a lot of things that I needed to work on. It showed me that I couldn't just rely on my power," said Polite-Coffie. "My power got me out of trouble last year. It showed me that

I needed to implement more cardio into my workout. In the finals fight last year I was gassed after the first round. As a result of that experience I went back to the drawing board and worked on things. Now I feel way better."

Polite-Coffie returns to the finals this year to take on the tough Nkosi Solomon, the defending Golden Gloves champion in the 201+ open division.

The two have fought once before. Solomon, a member of the USA Boxing team, stopped Polite-Coffie in a razor-thin 3-2 split decision in the Metro Championship for the right to go to Nationals.

"I thought I won the fight. This time will be different," said Polite-Coffie. "I look back on the fight ... I was landing shots, but I was landing shots like one shot there and then like a one-two there. I need to put together more combinations. Judges like to see that."

Polite-Coffie has put a strong emphasis on roadwork. He feels that conditioning is going to play a vital role in the fight, that upping the tempo and increasing the number of punches he throws will help him to victory this time.

"It is going to come down to my cardio and punch output," he said. "I've been trying to emphasize trying to put out more punches — putting out like a hundred punches a round and trying to sustain all three rounds."

A majority of his fights haven't seen the closing bell.

"I'm a boxer-puncher. I can box, but I also have devastating power," he said. "Most of my fights have ended in TKOs."

Learning from his mistakes last year, Polite-Coffie will look to correct his flaws in Friday night's final at the Manhattan Center.

"The thing about the Marine Corps is they'll train you for failure, but when you get to failure you're expected to push past that. It's a gut check," said Polite-Coffie. "It's pretty much how it is with boxing. When you get in that fight, just when you feel like you don't have any more to put out, but you hear that 10-second mark, you have got to dig deep and go to war."



Michael Polite-Coffie (top) hopes to avenge an earlier, split-decision loss to Nkosi Solomon (above) when the two meet in the finals of the 201+ open division.

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## PACKING PUNCH, QUICKLY

### Women newcomers to ring find success, advance to final

BY EVAN SMITH  
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

**T**HE WOMEN'S 112-pound weight class is ready to crown a new champion.

This year's finals matchup is a showdown between two relative newcomers to the sport, Jewel Lambert (Starrett City BC) and Gabriella Gulfin (Gleason's Gym).

This is Gulfin's second year in the tournament; Lambert is a Golden Gloves rookie.

"I'm having a lot of fun doing the Golden Gloves. It's my first time. I'm trying to soak it all in," said Lambert. "It's been a true learning experience. I've learned a lot about myself. It helped me gain confidence in myself and in the things I can do. Before I used to doubt myself, now I want to get up and try everything. It taught me what I can take, what I can handle and what my limits are."

In the other corner, Gulfin will be looking to give Lambert all she can handle. She has a mixed martial arts and jiu jitsu background, but picked up boxing to add another aspect to her fight game.

"The original reason I got into boxing was to improve my striking game in mixed martial arts, but I also fell in love with boxing. I've learned a lot. I've learned to go through with my punches instead of pushing them," said Gulfin.

"I'm more of a grappler. I use the grapples to fill in the blanks of my striking, so I wasn't used to that. My first time boxing I couldn't use my jiu jitsu to help me out," said Gulfin. "As I've had more fights, I've gotten more comfortable."

Lambert is also a big fan of combat sports. She always liked watching mixed martial arts and different types of fighting. Lambert had a little bit of experience in muay thai, but not much. She got into the sweet science after a trainer noticed her at a local gym.

"It just happened, one of the trainers at the gym noticed me. He liked the way I moved and suggested that I get into boxing," said Lambert. "I finally wanted to take the plunge and do something that I wanted to do for a change. I wanted to do this thing where I started saying yes and stopped saying no. I decided to take him up on his offer and start. Life is so short — you might as well try something new."

Lambert is putting in extra work at

the gym with a variety of different routines to prep for the fight.

"I'm motivated to get the best out of myself, to see how far I can take it," Lambert said. "I feel like what do in the gym is a little bit of everything. We do Stairmasters, I run a lot, I like to swim."

Gulfin is working hard, too. One of things that she feels separates her from her competitors is her diet. "Fighting in the Daily News Golden Gloves Final as a vegan makes winning even more crucial for me. I want to prove that one does not have to eat meat to be a beast," said Gulfin. "Eating meat brings the suffering of other living beings and damages the Earth, it does not make one a stronger fighter."

"I'm not here to tell people their life choice is wrong — just that a person can be great and go far on a plant-based diet."

Saturday afternoon's finals matchup at Aviator Recreation Center in Brooklyn will be a test for each competitor — and a special rematch of sorts.

The first time Lambert stepped into the ring for a boxing match it was against Gulfin, during a monthly boxing series at Gleason's Gym.

Lambert ended up facing Gulfin because her original opponent was a no-show, and Gulfin happened to be in the gym at the time and stepped up to the challenge.

It was only Gulfin's second bout, and she lost a hotly contested split-decision.

The fireworks will be flying in the rematch — each boxer possesses a toe-to-toe style, and the fans should get their money's worth.

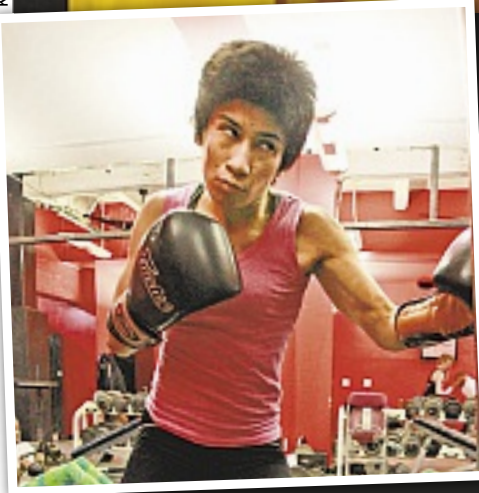
"I'm really excited to see how we both have grown," said Gulfin. "My job is going to make sure that I come out on top this time and I'm going to work for that finish."

"I love the crowd's energy — it gets me so into the fight. I'm very aggressive, I like to pressure and I like to stalk. She is also aggressive and a brawler like I am."

"It kind of just came back all around," said Lambert. "One year later we're going to be fighting each other again not too far from where we fought each other in the first place. I feel like I've grown a lot, not just as a person, but as a boxer too. To put that against the same person that I fought, it would just be like poetry. It's a perfect setup."



KEN GOLDFIELD



Gabriella Gulfin's vegan diet might be unusual for boxers, but she hopes to prove you don't have to eat meat to be strong.



Jewel Lambert thought she "might as well try something new," so when a trainer suggested boxing, she took up the sport.

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