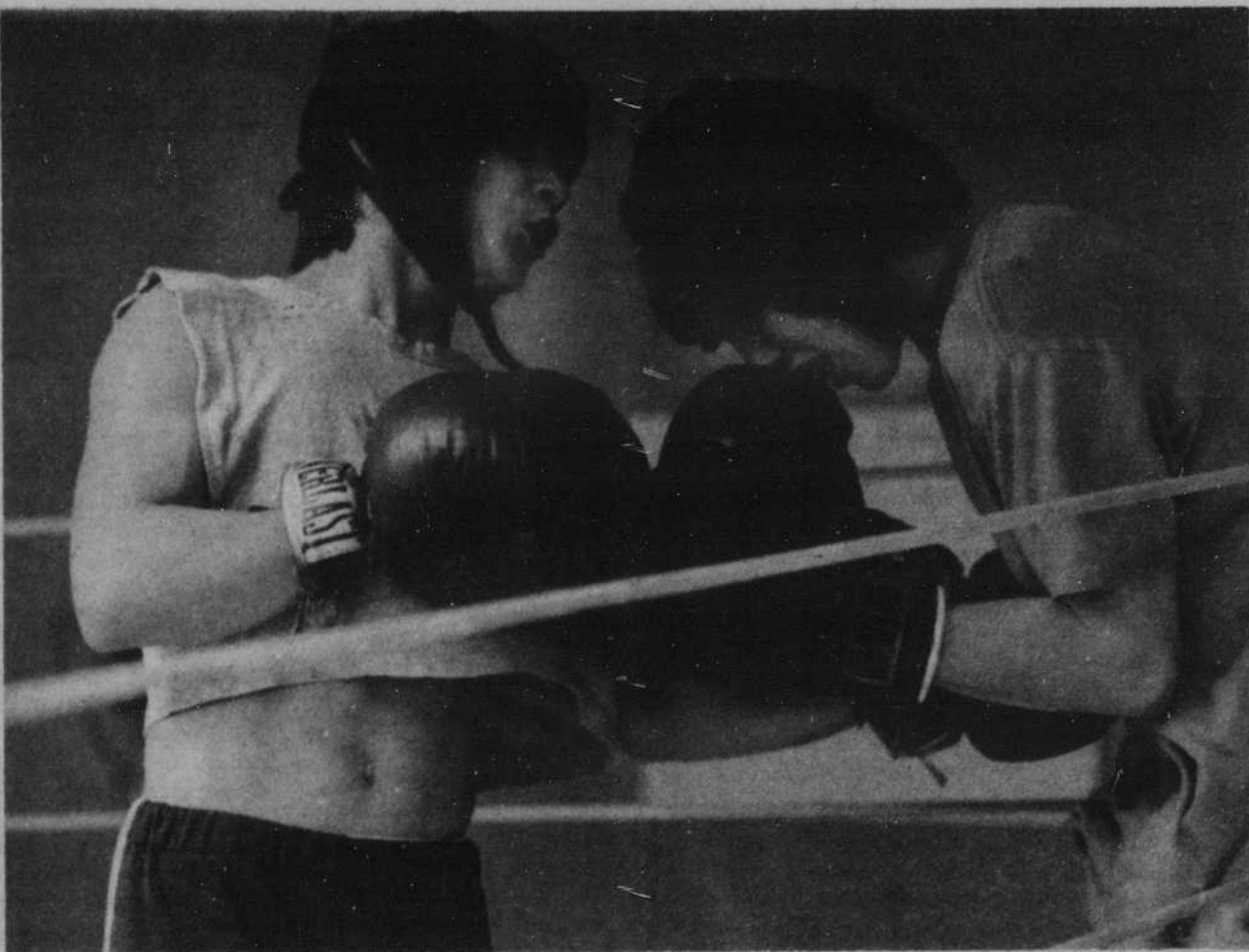




Photos by Patrick Sullivan

Boxing is increasing in popularity, and West Eugene Boxing Club coaches Bob Lee and Merrill Johnson have developed several national champion fighters in AAU competition. Boxers as young as 12 compete in the various weight classes.

Boxing club trains champs

By MIKE STREETER
Of the Emerald

Rocky Balboa of movie fame got his start in a small gym — pounding the bags, doing push-ups, shadow boxing and sparring.

Amateur boxing is increasing in popularity because of the movie and the successful showing of the U.S. Olympic Boxing Team in 1976.

Though there is still no University boxing team, there are private clubs in Eugene, one of which is considered the best in the Northwest.

The West Eugene Boxing Club, in operation for only two years, is ranked first in the region. This rise to excellence is attributed to coaches Bob Lee and Merrill Johnson. They have experience, and numerous champions to show for it.

"We have about 15 champions in different categories, and I have had five national champions," Johnson says.

One of WEB's AAU national champions and an Olympic hopeful is 15-year-old Guy Villegas, who won the lightweight championship last summer.

"I have always liked boxing," he says. "My father Ruben Villegas was the all-Navy champ and has always been a good influence on me. I also play soccer and track but I like boxing best." Villegas has a record of 230 wins and 18 losses in nine years of boxing and has not lost in over a year.

He now cannot find an opponent in Oregon and has to go out of state for competition.

"Guy is a great young fighter and we are going to have him ready for the 1980 Olympics in Moscow," Lee says.

There are other WEB fighters with Olympic potential according to Johnson.

"We have Jim Cooper, Myron Johnson and Terry Falls who have all won medals at the last Nationals," he says. Other WEB fighters include Steve Gloz, Reno Triplett, Rocky Dufek and Ross Sears.

Heavyweight Gloz has fought only four times but is showing potential says Johnson. Sears, only 12, has 35 victories in 45 bouts.

Triplett at 14 is also preparing for the Olympics; he already has 42 victories in 53 fights. "I like to wrestle also but I like boxing better," Triplett says. "Boxing is tougher but it is worth it and the coaches really push you to do your best."

Dufek, light-heavyweight, agrees with the other fighters about the coaching. "The coaches are always on top of you and are tough but that is how we get better," he says. "I have played football, basketball and baseball but boxing definitely takes more personal discipline and the coaches help you achieve that."

The club has a medium size gymnasium at 1455 Cityview. The gym is dominated by the 20-by-20 foot ring in its center. There are two heavy and one speed bag to go along with three slantboards for situps and two mirrors for shadow boxing.

As one of the boxers says, "It has no frills, it's made for business." Normally 15 to 25 boxers work out each day.

To become a WEB club member just appear at the gym between 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Monday thru Thursday.

"The first four workouts are free, but most don't like the hard work and won't be back after one or two times," says Lee. WEB membership is \$10 a month and a required AAU card costs \$12.50.



The West Eugene Boxing Club, rated the best in the Northwest, is currently training several Olympic hopefuls, including 15-year-old Guy Villegas, the AAU national lightweight champion.

Oregon Daily Emerald

What's happening

Wednesday
Wrestling — California 7:30 p.m.
Men's basketball — Sacramento State 8:10 p.m.

Thursday
Blazers — Cleveland 5:05 p.m.
Women's gymnastics — University of Denver 6:30 p.m.

Friday
Men's swimming — Husky Invitational 10 a.m.
Women's swimming — Husky Invitational 10 a.m.
Men's gymnastics — Oregon Open 7:30 p.m.
Wrestling — Arizona Invitational all day

Sunday
Men's swimming — Husky Invitational 10 a.m.
Women's swimming — Husky Invitational 10 a.m.
Blazers — Hall of Fame Game TBA

Saturday
Men's swimming — Husky Invitational 10 a.m.
Women's swimming — Husky Invitational 10 a.m.
Men's gymnastics — Oregon Open 1 p.m.
Blazers — New York 5 p.m.
Women's basketball — Northwest Invaders 5:30 p.m.
Men's basketball — Athletes in Action 8:10 p.m.
Wrestling — Arizona Invitational all day

Monday
Outdoor program meeting — 23 EMU 3:30 p.m.
Men's basketball — Detroit 8:10 p.m.

* home meets

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