



Sugar Ray Leonard, right, interviews finalists in the Budweiser-sponsored Sugar Ray Leonard Golden Gloves Tournament, the championships of which were fought recently in Des Moines. The television tournament will be broadcast in more than 150 cities coast to coast.

Amateur boxing booms in U.S.

Across the country last year, more than 20,000 boys between the ages of 10-15 slipped on gloves and climbed into a ring.

Most of them were white and middle class, the products of organized boxing programs sanctioned by this country's ruling body of amateur boxing. But the sport still has its roots in the ghetto, where the action in the ring has always been more than just another form of childhood recreation and where, often, nobody's sanction is sought.

It begins on troubled corners or the hallways of housing projects. They fight to answer a challenge, to pass a test, to win their place in the pecking order of youth. Then they wander into a gym and turn the satisfaction and skill of a sport.

Let's set the scene: It is Friday night in the city, any city in the U.S.A. The club is rocking. The heavy bags and jump ropes have been locked away. Rows of metal folding chairs flank the ring, and at a nominal fee, usually around 2 or 3 dollars a head, the neighborhood has filed in for some real head-banging entertainment. Some of the crowd of about 150 people are family and friends of the boxers; others, just partisans of the ring. Tonight, the local talent faces visitors from eastern Oregon.

The gym is located in a building that reeks with tradition. The walls are adorned with fight posters and portraits of some of Portland's finest amateurs: "No smoking" signs are posted, but the crowd ignores them; and soon a white haze begins to form around the network of pipes that hang low overhead.

As common as these bouts are, they are illegitimate. Bouts like

these non-sanctioned ones are called "smokers" or bootleg bouts. Often at these events there is no doctor at ringside, no seasoned referee, and no one to insist that the young fighters wear protective headgear. Still, it is not these minor infractions of the law, or the gritty milieu the young fighters box in, that concerns the people who regulate amateur boxing. What troubles them is the safety of the growing boys, the injuries to which they are exposed. Most doctors agree that if young boys are properly trained, equipped and supervised, and if their bouts are stopped at the first sign of trouble, the danger of sustaining a serious injury in the ring is minimal. Recently, doctors for the United States Amateur Boxing Federation, which sets rules for amateur boxing, conducted a national survey of injuries over a two-year period, primarily involving boxers from ages 10 to 26.

The survey showed that 78 per cent of the head injuries reported were among those fighters who did not wear protective headgear. One death was reported from heart failure, in a teenager with a sickle-cell trait that had not been picked up in a pre-fight physical.

Even though the survey was based on a random survey and involved voluntary injuries instead of a compulsory submission of records, the survey clearly showed that substantially fewer boys suffer serious injuries boxing than comparable groups in football and baseball. Still, there is no way to gauge the effect of repeated poundings over a long period on young fighters. Under federation rules for competition, 10- and 11-year-olds fight



CURTIS RAMSAY

three one-minute rounds; 12- and 13-year-olds fight 1½-minute rounds. For those 16 years of age and older, the time is increased to a full three-minute round. In each case, there is a minute's rest between rounds.

Some trainees pace their boxers, allowing them to box only once a month or less, but it is not uncommon for a 15-year-old who has been fighting for five years in both bootleg and sanctioned bouts to have 300 fights to his credit. At this rate psychogenic effects, the loss of memory and learning disabilities could take place in 10 or 15 years.

These young gladiators sweat and toil endlessly, and some even dream of one day becoming a Sugar Ray Leonard or a Larry Holmes.

The dream of becoming champion could hurt them; let us hope that negligence in the ring never will.

AFL Playoffs

Cincinnati vs. San Diego

What can the AFL do for an encore? They've already provided us with more thrills than one can imagine. San Diego is the pick here to derail the Bengals. Dan Fouts should find enough holes in the Bengal secondary to provide victory. Take Chargers by 3 points.

NFL

San Francisco is on a roll. Tony Dorsett says he's happy to be playing forty-niners. Ronnie Lott says his team can't make the same mistakes against Dallas as they did against the Giants. Lott and 49ers should prevail.

San Francisco's soggy track should slow down the speedy Dorsett. Take forty-niners by 6. Super Bowl should be San Diego and San Francisco for the championship of California.

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