

Try Me

Knocked out over boxing

By Robert Annis ■ Custom Publications

The first rule of executive boxing at Broad Ripple Martial Arts is:
 Don't look for it in Broad Ripple.

Years ago, the business was located in Broad Ripple, but when rising rent costs dictated a move to 65th Street and State Road 37, they kept the name. While not as geographically confusing as the whole Greenland/Iceland thing, it can make for a pretty meandering drive if you don't know where you're going.

Although it's a boxing class, don't expect to see a bunch of testosterone-filled meatheads looking to beat someone into oblivion. A variety of people go to the classes, held Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday; many for different reasons.

Chuck Page started boxing to lose weight (he dropped 30 pounds in 12 weeks) and now wants to get his pro license. Teenager Ryan Lambert is having fun learning to box and sparring with his friends. Ryan's mom, Lisa, a petite 50-something New Jersey transplant, started taking the class soon after her son.

"I watched for the first night, and it looked like fun. So I decided that rather than wait for my son, I might as well be getting some exercise also," she said. "The last thing I ever thought I'd do is boxing. I've done aerobics and weights, but I've seen faster results from boxing than I did with either of those."

Ray Marconi is the trainer for the executive boxing class. He's been in the fight game for years. His wife, Vickki, serves

as the cutperson for the pro fighters he trains. (Vickki recently started taking the class herself to stay in shape.) Ray would be the Mickey to my Rocky (or more truthfully, the Mickey to my Celebrity-Boxing-era Refrigerator Perry).

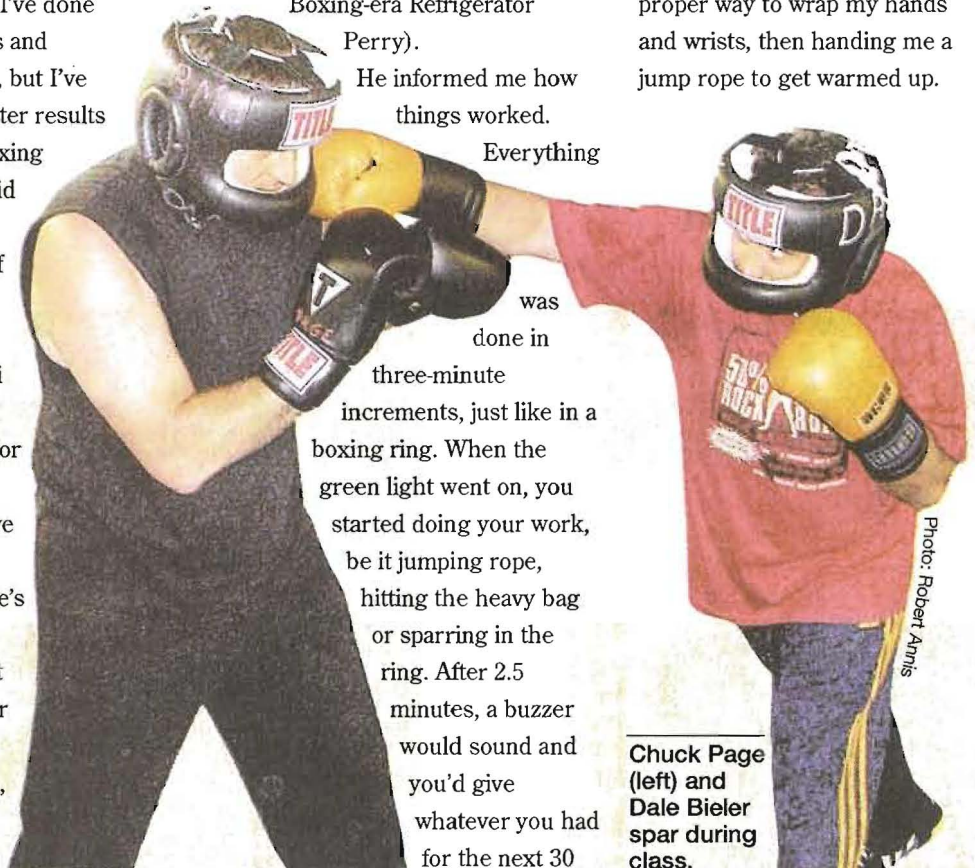
He informed me how things worked.

Everything

was done in three-minute increments, just like in a boxing ring. When the green light went on, you started doing your work, be it jumping rope, hitting the heavy bag or sparring in the ring. After 2.5 minutes, a buzzer would sound and you'd give whatever you had for the next 30

seconds. At the end of that time, another buzzer would sound as the red light came on, meaning rest. The cycle would repeat until the end of class.

Chuck offered to help me get started, teaching me the proper way to wrap my hands and wrists, then handing me a jump rope to get warmed up.



Chuck Page (left) and Dale Bieler spar during class.

Photo: Robert Annis

Jumping rope is harder than it looks, especially if you haven't done it in more than 20 years. I felt silly because I couldn't do more than a few jumps before the rope would lodge in the tread of my shoes. Looking around at everyone else skipping rope effortlessly, I quickly surmised I'd gotten a defective jump rope. The next three I tried were defective as well.

After warming up with the jump rope, Ray showed me some of the basics of boxing, such as the correct stance, a left-right-left punch combination and how to block punches. As I shadowboxed and hit the heavy bag, I practiced my combination punches. Always end with a left, Ray warned, so you can get your right back in a defensive position to protect

your head and block your opponent's punches.

On my second day of training, Ray decided I was ready to get into the ring with Mike Davis, an actual professional boxer and former titleholder, for a bit of practice.

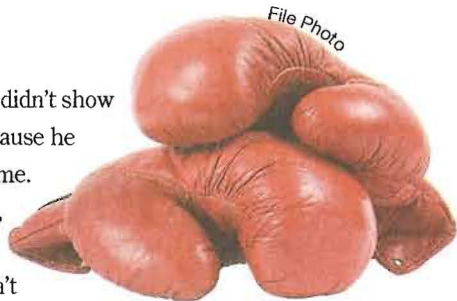
"Don't worry about hitting him," Ray said. "You're not going to hurt him."

Hurt him? I couldn't even hit him. Mike was quick as a cat, darting away from me as I tried the one combination I had learned and giving me a few quick jabs to the head whenever I dropped my hands. Even though this was sparring in only the loosest sense, his eyes burned with the same intensity he would have in a real fight. Most people, if they saw those eyes coming toward them in a dark alley, would turn and run as fast as they could the other way.

Luckily, that intensity didn't show up in his punches because he was taking it easy on me.

When he'd punch me, it was hard enough to let me know I shouldn't drop my hands, but not so hard as to leave me with a concussion.

If you've only watched boxing on television, you can't realize how tiring it is. I kept missing with my combinations, and each time I tried again, I'd be throwing punches with less authority. By the end of the first three-minute round, my arms were jelly. Between rounds, I tried to regain my strength, but I was shot. The 18-ounce gloves felt like 18 pounds as I kept dropping my hands more and getting pummeled by Mike. By the time the second round ended, I had landed maybe two punches, both of which



were just glancing blows. As I rolled out of the ring, he was quick to offer encouragement.

What I learned: Boxing is one of the most physically demanding sports I've tried, even when no one is trying to beat your head in. At the end of each class, I was practically swimming in a pool of my own sweat, and I could barely move my arms. Watching the sport on television, you have no idea how physically taxing it is. Pound-for-pound, this is one of the best — and funnest — workouts you can try for getting yourself into shape. +

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