

EDDIE COOL---PRIDE OF TACONY

It has long been the perception that the typical Philadelphia fighter is a fearless, all action warrior who must be carried out on his shield before he will concede defeat. Indeed Philly has had more than its share of these type of battlers. But generally overlooked is the fact that the city has produced legions of highly skilled craftsmen, experts in the art of boxing.

Tommy Loughran, Philadelphia Jack O'Brien, Midget Wolgast, Harold Johnson, Jeff Chandler, Joey Giardello all won world titles due largely for their boxing technique. Of course other top Philly men like Tyrone Everett, Johnny Hutchinson, Georgie Benton, Boogaloo Watts, Wesley Mouzon, Jimmy Young, Dick Welsh, Willie Monroe, Tyrone Crawley and many others were known primarily for their boxing skills. But perhaps the best of them all was a cocky, undisciplined irishman from the Tacony section of N.E. Philadelphia named Eddie Cool.

During the height of his career Eddie was a drunk--not an alcoholic but a "passed out in the gutter" drunk, which he freely admitted. His excapades were legendary and he totally exasperated three of Philadelphia's all-time greatest trainers: Jimmy Coster, Jack Brady and Jimmy Wilson, all of whom took turns trying to keep Eddie in harness and take advantage of his superlative talent.

Cool was born Feb. 16, 1912 and the sudden death of his father at age 15 forced him to become the sole support of his mother. Eddie who loved to fight figured boxing was the best (and only) way for him to succeed. After a short amateur career he turned pro on Thanksgiving day 1928, winning a four rounder from Mike Palmer at the Cambria where he would build a rabid following. Managed by a neighborhood ice-man named Joe Bradley, Cool was virtually self taught in the nuances of the fight game by facing unusually stiff competition in the beginning of his career. Suffering 8 losses and three draws in his first 34 matches, Eddie learned his trade the hard way. He developed a swift counter-punching style that when properly trained was beautiful to watch.

By 1932 Eddie had become a constant winner. But it was his victory over flashy Jackie Willis, the pride of 20th + Federal, that really made people sit up and take notice. Eddie snapped Willis' 32 bout unbeaten streak with a magnificent display of precision punching on April 22, 1932 at the Cambria, winning 9 out^{of} 10 rounds.

Two upset victories over long time lightweight contender Lew Massey in November and December at the Arena put Eddie in the ratings. His second win over the downtowner was particularly impressive as he picked himself off the floor being badly hurt in the second round to stage a spectacular rally to nip Lew at the wire.

Philadelphia at this time was a lightweight hotbed that included Cool, Massey, Willis, Tony Falco, Johnny Jadick, Tony Morgano, Georgie Gibbs, Young Firpo and the top dog Benny Bass, that provided the city's boxing fans with an exciting local round-robin of cross-town rivalries and neighborhood fueds, As all of the above faced each other in hectic matches. When the smoked cleared Cool and Bass had licked all the others and became their own chief rivals.

On Sept. 9, 1933 Cool scored a brilliant victory over Frankie Klick after 10 torid rounds at the Arena and issued challenges to jr. lightweight champion Kid Chocolate, who had dethroned Bass in July of 1931, and Barney Ross, recent winner of the lightweight crown from Tony Canzoneri. The Klick match was promoted by Morris ~~Fried~~^{FRIED} and Rudy ~~Fishman~~^{FISHMAN}, rivals of the top Philly promoters Herman Taylor and Bobby Gunnis, who now offered Cool the big money shot with Benny Bass on Dec. 28th at Convention Hall. Fried and Fishman had tried to match Cool against Chocolate and after being out manouvered by Taylor-Gunnis, they countered by persuading "the Keed" to defend ~~against~~ against Klick at the Arena on Dec. 26. Klick scored a sensational seventh round upset KO to win the championship.

Meanwhile on the 28th Cool seemed in awe of the legendary Bass and gave him a little too much respect in front of 8,500 fans who braved a monstrous snow storm to witness a fast paced action match. Disappointed by losing both the Bass bout and the title shot, Eddie reportedly went on a long binge.

Now under the management of Sam Weinberg, after Cool replaced Joe Bradley who he considered "too strict," Eddie would look great some nights and unmotivated on other nights and it was no secret that his conditioning and life style left much to be desired.

Matinee idol handsome and impeccably dressed Eddie was hotly pursued by the young ladies and liked to step out on the town but after marrying in the summer of 1934 he seemed for awhile to re-dedicate himself to boxing and wowed them at Madison Square Garden with a couple of outstanding performances beating Al Roth and Teddy Loder. The New York press wrote "Cool was a brilliant boxer who landed with the precision of a fencer, stabbing and jabbing his opponent at will" after the Roth bout.

Cool was to prove a disappointment in his next New York appearance losing to Sammy Fuller with a lackluster performance. And it was about this time that reports of Cool sitting on the curb passing the bottle with the neighborhood rummies and passing out in the gutter, dead drunk in his cashmere top coat, persisted.

He still managed to remain highly ranked in spite of it all. Although he would drop a decision here and there, usually on the road, he was still able to score big victories over such top fighters as Benny Bass, Harry Dublinsky, Fritzie Zivic, Red Cochrane, Chino Alvarez and in his greatest performance outpointing lightweight champion Lou Ambers on Oct. 28, 1936 at the Arena. Ambers in his previous match 6 weeks earlier had taken the crown from Tony Canzoneri.

This victory catapulted Cool to the number one contender in his division where he remained for over a year hoping in vain for a shot at Ambers with the title on the line. But Al Weill (Ambers' manager) considered Eddie too much of a risk with too little financial inducement to even consider.

Eddie's lifestyle would shortly catch up with him and he was totally washed-up by age 27. He crowded 140 pro fights into his career of which he lost 28, scoring only 15 KO's depending on his boxing ability to thwart his opposition.

When discussing Cool with those who saw him perform their descriptions of him could best be described as "shoulda, woulda, coulda." Willie O'Neill, former trainer of Jeff Chandler, said Cool was 'when in shape, the second greatest boxer ever to come out of Philly' (rating Midget Wolgast as the best).

The late Dan Cavanaugh (who saw almost every fight card in Philly from 1917 to the early '70's) a great admirer of Tommy Loughran, said of Cool 'when he was right he was the best Philadelphia boxer of them all.' And long-time trainer Sam Solomon said 'Eddie was a wonderful boxer who coulda been champ.'

-Chuck Hasson

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