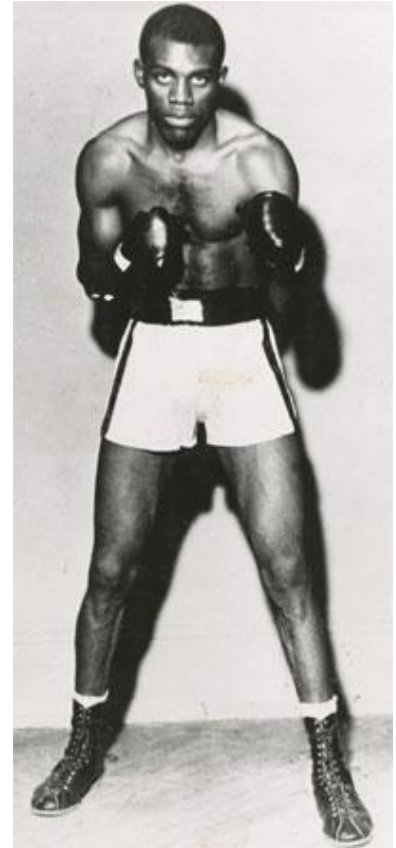


# Former Philly welterweight Dick Turner passes

*By John DiSanto – PhillyBoxingHistory.com*

On Sunday (January 5, 2020) the sad news came that former Philly welterweight Dick Turner passed away after a few years of declining health. He was just shy of his 83rd birthday. Turner had an eventful boxing career that ended prematurely in 1963 due to an eye injury. After retirement from the ring, he stayed away from the sport for a period, disappointed that the pursuit of his dream had been cut short. However, he later returned to boxing to help guide his talented nephews, the fighting Fletcher brothers (Frank, Anthony and Troy). Turner then became a trainer and worked with numerous Philly kids with the same dream that he once had.

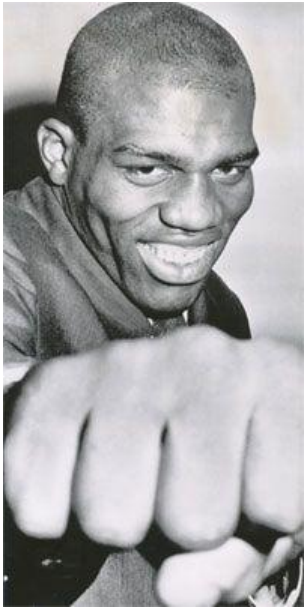


In his later years, Mr. Turner was considered one of the elder statesmen of the local boxing scene. He was an expert at handicapping fights and boxing careers in general, and was always ready to talk about the sport. He was always a true gentleman who was highly respected and liked by all. In a community filled with rivalries, constant sniping and whispered insults, no one ever said a bad word about Dick Turner.

Because his career ended early, he never reached the heights that he might have in boxing. But make no mistake, Turner had an important career and was one of the last of the great ring legends that still remain in Philadelphia.

Turner was born January 14, 1937 and began boxing while in the Navy. The proud Southwest Philadelphian turned professional at the Capitol Arena in Washington, DC on April 03, 1959, defeating Ray Allen by first round TKO. He made his second start a few weeks later against Bill Griffin and stopped him in the second round.

As his young career got started, Turner made a habit of taking risks instead of facing other boxers at a similar experience level. With just two bouts under his belt, Turner took on sixteen-bout pro Al Styles, 12-3-1, 6 KOS, in September of 1959 in Atlantic City. Styles held wins over Ike White and Chico Corsey, and had fought to a draw with Bruce Gibson. By all accounts, Styles was about to win big over the green upstart.



However Turner, scored his third win, against all odds, by second round TKO over Styles.

Turner was a tall and rangy boxer. He had fine technical skills but could also punch with authority. His mix of skills made him a promising prospect.

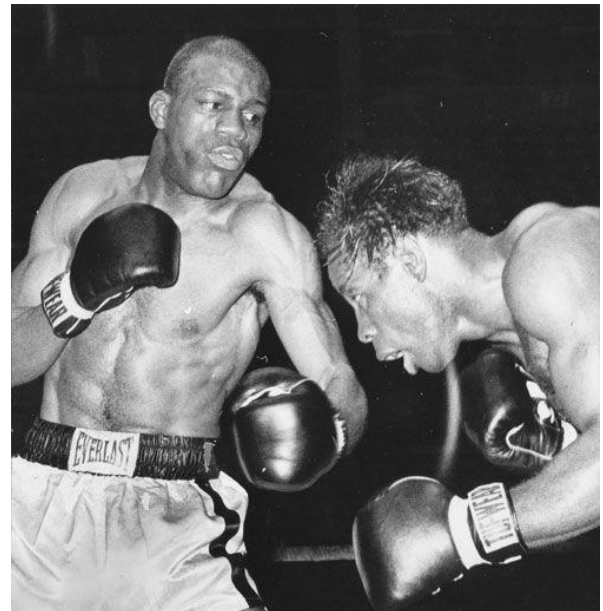
The surprise victory over Styles wasn't his last. In fact, it became his business to defeat favored foes. He later upset Harold Richardson at Madison Square Garden and then in 1962, scored perhaps his biggest shocker of his career.

On February 22, 1962, Turner entered the Blue Horizon with a nice 11-0-1, 8 KOs, record. On paper, he was no more than a prospect. His opponent that evening was veteran Federico Thompson of Argentina. Thompson entered the fight with a whopping pro record of 113-10-9 with 62 KOs, and was the former Argentine and South American welterweight champion.

By all indications, Turner had been led to the slaughter. But someone forgot to tell him that he was in way over his head. In an absolute jaw dropper, Turner won a majority eight-round decision over the seasoned Thompson.

Dick won his next seven starts, including impressive wins over Percy Manning (TKO3) and Isaac Logart (W10), raising his record to 19-0-1, 11 KOs.

On October 11, 1963, Turner faced bona fide "Philly Killer" Jose Stable at the Blue Horizon and dropped a ten-round majority decision. It was his first professional loss. Stable had defeated rising star Kitten Hayward in his previous bout and held wins over the likes of Charley Scott, Curtis Cokes, CL Lewis, Sweet Pea Adams, Kenny Lane, Chico Velez, and many other fine fighters. For Philly boxers, Stable was kryptonite at the time. So the close defeat at the hands of Stable did nothing to tarnish Turner's reputation.



***Turner, left versus Issac Logart***

Three months later Turner squared off with Kitten Hayward at the Arena in a battle between two of Philly's best welterweight prospects of the day. Their ten-rounder was an extremely close and classy contest. Hayward came away with the razor-thin decision victory over ten rounds.

Once again, the loss seemed to be a just minor setback for Turner. It was just another learning experience that figured to only make the talented Southwest Philly fighter better. However, something critical happened during the fight. Sometime during their nip-and-tuck contest, the 27 year old Turner suffered a detached retina.

In those days, such an injury was an automatic career-ender – no questions asked. And in fact, Turner never fought again due to the injury.

The loss of his career hit Turner hard. He stayed away from the sport for decades, bitterly disappointed that his career had been cut short in its prime. Turner went to work and tried to put boxing behind him. Among the jobs he held, Turner worked as a window-washer and scaled the high-rise buildings of Philadelphia to ply his trade.

But boxing has a way of drawing you back in.

Years later when his sister Lucille Fletcher's sons (Frank, Anthony, and Troy) began boxing, Dick Turner reluctantly returned to the gym to help his nephews navigate the choppy waters of pugilism. Getting involved with Frank "The Animal" Fletcher and Anthony "Two Gun" Fletcher reignited his love of the sport and Turner was back in the business for good. Later he also helped guide the youngest of the "Fighting Fletchers", Troy, who became PA State champion.



For decades, Turner trained young fighters at the Kingsessing Recreation Center in Southwest Philly. There he guided countless kids and imparted his gentle wisdom to all of them. One of the young boxers he worked with was another nephew, Glenn Turner. He continued to train young men at the Rec until the death of his wife slowed him down and took away much of his desire for the sport.

In his final years, he made occasional appearances at his old rec center gym, where his nephew Troy Fletcher trained boxers in his place. He was also a regular at the Briscoe Awards until 2014 and at times attended the PA Boxing Hall of Fame ceremony. In his final four years or so, Turner's health declined sharply and he rarely came out to public events.

Turner entered the Pennsylvania Boxing Hall of Fame in 2007 for his accomplishments as a boxer. Although his career was impressive, Turner will be better remembered by those who knew him for his gentle and kind nature. He was a wonderful man as well as a fine boxer.

