

Cuddy
DeMarco

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Thursday, 03 May 2007

Cuddy DeMarco

Ever hear of a professional boxer who fought 339 bouts in eight years? How about a guy who won 161 straight fights before losing over a three-and-a-half-year period?

The name is Cuddy DeMarco and the announcement that he'll be honored Sunday at the annual Dapper Dan Banquet in Pittsburgh brought back memories to veteran boxing observers in this neck of the woods. Cuddy is among the Western Pennsylvania sports personalities who'll be honored guests at the fete. Born Christopher DeMarco at 200 Meadow Ave., Charleroi, in 1904, Cuddy was one of five brothers in the well-known Charleroi boxing family. They formed several boxing clubs that were forerunners of the Charleroi Hilltop AC.

"He (Cuddy) was one of the best to come out of the Mon Valley," exclaims George Humphries, "Mr. Boxing" in Charleroi. "He met all comers, including six world champions in an era when there were no decisions and no qualms about weight differences."

As Humphries explains it, championship matches were difficult to obtain during those days, but DeMarco faced the likes of Mike Ballerino. Jack Bernstein and Louis (Kid) Kaplan twice each and Benny Bass, Jimmy Goodrich and Joe Dundee once. Dundee, a classy Italian champ, held the welterweight crown from 1927-29. while Goodrich was a lightweight king and Bass and Kaplan featherweight champions from 1925-28.

And Cuddy was a stablemate of the legendary Harry Greb of Pittsburgh who held the middleweight Championship from 1923 to 1926.

"CUDDY PROBABLY took more punishment in the workouts with Greb than he did in most of his fights," opinions Humphries. "But Greb thought highly of him and felt he was well-prepared for an important bout if he sparred with Cuddy."

DeMarco who was tagged with the nickname Cuddy by his boyhood cronies in the Charleroi Hill District, began fighting as a professional in 1921. He pounded out the aforementioned 161 straight victories in three-and-a-half years before suffering his first defeat in 1924. Cuddy then bounced back with an impressive victory over Jack Zivic at Forbes Field in Pittsburgh.

Zivic, whose brother Fritzie later won the world welterweight championship, came into the Forbes Field clash fresh from a win over highly-touted Lew Tandler in Philadelphia and the verdict for DeMarco gained added prestige because of Zivic's previous success. According to Humphries, DeMarco earned nearly \$250,000 as a fighter. But he spent much of it in a vain effort to restore the sight of his blind brother, Freddie. And Cuddy, like most other boxers of his day, had a flair for the good things in life and spent his earnings freely.

The other DeMarco brothers included Joe, Louis and Tony ,the oldest, who acted as manager and trainer for the others. Tony, who died a couple of years ago, was the father of Carmen DeMarco well-known district basketball official, and Tony DeMarco, a Fox Grocery employee.

Cuddy now makes his home in Glenshaw and is a manufacturer's agent for a firm that produces advertising novelties.

"They all did a lot for boxing in the Mon Valley," Humphries says. "Cuddy was the best of the boys who Boxed and he deserves any honor he receives."

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Cuddy DeMarco

It requires an amazing fellow to compile such an amazing fight record, but Cuddy DeMarco, certainly one of Pittsburgh's greatest men of the ring, fits the character perfectly. He started boxing at the tender age of 6. He fought for three and a half years, winning 112 fights in a row before he as much as suffered a draw. Then he ran the string to 138 bouts without a reverse.

In 12 years as a pro, he climbed in and out of the ring for 339 fights. He lost only 24 and was held to a draw in but 15. Most of his defeats came near the end of his turbulent and quite profitable career, when he admits he was through but hanging on for the purse.

Busy man, well Cuddy believes he holds some kind of record for taking part in four fights in four cities in four different states within the space of five days. He won two and drew in the other two.

FOUR BOUTS IN FIVE DAYS

He battled a 15 round draw with Pal Moran in New Orleans to start the week, beat Jack Zivic in Pittsburgh, Harry Felix in New York, drew a deep breath and met tough Johnny Indrisano in Boston, another draw.

Dapper |Dan, Cuddy was one of the originals. He still is today but the clothes he wore when he was earning the half million that came his way were his pride and joy.

"I still own what I call an International outfit" he says, "I don't wear it much anymore but I trotted it out a few years ago when I went to St. Paul's Cathedral in Oakland on Easter Sunday. The Top Hat came from Paris, the coat from New York, I got the trousers in London, the walking stick in Melbourne, Australia, and the rest of the apparel here in Pittsburgh.

Remarkable Record

The more deeply one delves into DeMarco's record, the more astounding it becomes.

"I fought all over the United States" he relates. Alaska, Australia, Europe, South Africa, Cuba and British Columbia. Although my biggest purse was only \$17,000 I must have made close to \$500,000 in the ring. I made a lot and spent a lot .

"I thought nothing of paying \$17,000 for a Dusenberg . I had 36 autos in 21 years. I spent \$36,000 on nine operations to help my brother get his sight restored. I don't have much to show for my years in the ring, but I can truthfully say I had a good time while it lasted. I enjoyed life."

Greb His Idol

Despite all the great opponents he met, all the money he made, and the cities he visited the world over, Cuddy's memories always go back to the days he spent with his stable mate , the late Harry Greb.

"Never saw a fellow like him, inside or outside of the ring" Cuddy declares. " I knew Greb as well as anybody in town.I lived with him and trained with him". "Harry liked his playboy reputation and though he tried to live up to it he had a hard time. I never saw him take more than two drinks, yet he always tried to act tight. He'd go out the night before a fight, play around, and next night give his opponent the licking of his life. He liked people to point out that fact, but he was always in shape.

Greb would be a pip today, with the present day fighters. He wouldn't have trouble with a guy like Joe Louis because Louis is a puncher. Those punchers were easy for Harry. A boxer was the only kind of guy who could give him any sass. Billy Conn and Greb would have made a dandy fight, if Billy boxed him. But if Billy tried to slug it would have been too bad, Harry loved those kind.

"Weight didn't hold any terrors for Greb. He fought as a 160 pounder and thought nothing of taking on 180 pounders or 200 pounders. He could and did fight several times a week.

"The secret of his success was condition. He worked on the road and two or three hours in the gym and he was mighty tough even in the gym. I trained with him and he gave me a roughing many times.

Cuddy who weighed 135 in his prime now scales 175. He's 41 years old and is a candidate for the post of boxing commissioner to succeed the late Matty Bain.

Never Held Title

Strangely for the record he compiled and the number of champions he encountered Cuddy never

held a title.

He put on his first pair of gloves when he was 6 years old. With his brother Fred, who later was blinded in a gun accident, Cuddy put on a brother act on the Keith Vaudeville Circuit. The DeMarco's (not to be confused with the dancing DeMarco's) lasted for six years and Cuddy eyed a boxing career.

In 1921 he began as a pro under the management of Jim Buchanan of Charleroi. He was 17 years old. A year later Red Mason bought his contract for \$250 and it was a happy and profitable association.

Faced Best In The Ring

Among the men he faced were Jimmy Goodrich, Benny Bass, Jack Bernstein, Louis Kid Kaplan, Mike Ballerino, Joe Dundee, Billy Petrolle, Solly Seeman, Pal Moran, Luis Vincentini, Eddie Kid Wagner, Billy Wallace, Willie Harmon, Bobby Garcia, George KO Chaney, Ruby Goldstein, Jack Zivic and Sid Terris. He fought many of them more than once.

"I'll never forget the fight with Terris" said Cuddy. "He had won 68 in a row and I had won 97 straight, two pretty fair streaks. I won that one and went on to make it 112 until I drew with Kid Kaplan in his home town of Waterbury. I made it 138 without a defeat until Jack Bernstein beat me.

Recalls Zivic Fight

Two of DeMarco's biggest battles took place in Pittsburg against Jack Zivic. He beat Zivic twice, the first time at Forbes field in a Milk and Ice Fund show before a \$36,000 gate, the largest this city had seen up to that time. Later he beat Zivic again at Motor Square Garden.

Cuddy has loads of respect for Petrolle, the Fargo Express. He calls Petrolle the best puncher he ever faced, and the best all round fighter. Terris was the best boxer. The best fight DeMarco thinks he put up was the first Zivic battle. There's no contest when it comes to the best fighter he ever saw – Greb.

For the past 12 years Cuddy has been in business for himself as a salesman of men's accessories with the emphasis on shirts and ties. During the war he worked in the ship yards Dravo and American Bridge. His full name is – and please don't laugh – Christopher Furey Constantine DeMarco.

Cuddy liked His Fun

The funniest experience he ever had ?

"Red Mason kept me pretty busy fighting 2 he relates " and one day driving to the scene of a bout, I told the driver to stop and let me out and go ahead. I decided to hitchhike and have some fun. I was picked up by a Circus and for three weeks I travelled with them. My job was a sort of

a shill. When the Circus boxer asked for volunteers from the crowd I'd speak up.

"I picked up a few hundred dollars but gave it all back to the Circus people. I had plenty in those days. I was gone for three weeks and Mason was wild trying to locate me. He had a tough time finding me. I used the name of Battling Moskowitz of Pittsburg.



ACTOR, FIGHTER, FASHION-PLATE are three high spots in the career of Cuddy Marco, one of the greatest fighters Pittsburgh ever knew.
1—At the age of 5, with his brother, Fred, 6, when they made their debut on the Ke Vaudeville Circuit as the "Fighting DeMarcos."
2—As a fighter in his prime.
3—The Beau Brummel, leaving St. Paul's Cathedral in Oakland on Easter morning in his "international outfit."

