

Commonwealth champion joins local gym as boxing coach

By Jake Courtepatte

When one door closes, another one opens

While Aurora's Donovan Boucher may have hit a bump in the road two decades ago that sidetracked his boxing career, a late comeback and a love of the sport has landed him a spot as the new head coach of boxing at Fearless MMA.

Born in Jamaica, a young Toronto-based Boucher got his start at Sully's Gym in Toronto around the age of twelve, persuaded to check it out by an amateur boxer friend of his.

"At first I said no, because I was interested in and good at other sports, like soccer," said Boucher.

But the sport of boxing was in its heyday in the 1980s, with the likes of Sugar Ray Leonard, Mike Tyson, and Muhammad Ali in the ring, who Boucher said he really admired. He joined and quickly realized he excelled at the sport.

It was in that gym that he was spotted by Toronto promoter Tony Unitas, who Boucher said "recognized the talent in him." At the age of just thirteen, he was asked to participate in his first amateur bout, which he proceeded to win.

"I thought it was just great. Winning a trophy at that age was an accomplishment. After that I was looking for the next one. And it all started from there."

He turned professional in 1985 and quickly rose to the top of the boxing world. He says one of his best career moments is when he took just two rounds to defeat Olympic silver medalist Shawn O'Sullivan in 1988.

He won the Commonwealth welterweight belt in 1989, a title that he held onto for three years.

He was even promoted by the legendary Don King, getting his name on cards in both the United States and Europe. By 1996, he held an impressive professional record of 30 - 5, eighteen coming by way of knockout.

It was the same year that a controversial brain scan would put his boxing career on hold for over a decade. The Ontario Boxing Commission refused to license Boucher after finding some anomalies in the scan, albeit inconclusive ones.

"They didn't really know what the spots were, they wouldn't let me fight for about ten years," said Boucher. "I was pretty depressed about that."

Another brain scan in 2007 showed no issues, and Boucher decided to get back into the young-man's sport at the age of 45. He won his first two bouts back in Montreal and Edmonton by unanimous decisions, before his dream of becoming Canada's oldest boxing champion fell apart in the light middleweight title bout at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto. He officially retired one year later.

When Fearless MMA became affiliated with Boxing Ontario this past June, he saw the opportunity to teach youth in the community discipline and direction.

"You have to make the time for what you want, and that's what I want to teach them."

The gym is located at 110 Connaught Avenue in Aurora, and is open to all ages, abilities, and fitness levels. The 6,000 sq. ft. space is home to a full-size competition boxing ring, a 20-ft. MMA cage, 25 hanging heavy bags, and much more.

"It's not all about hitting and getting hit," said Boucher. "We offer up boxing as a form of fitness, and as a great workout for anybody."

You can check out their website at www.fearlessmma.ca.