

THE CABBAGETOWN YOUTH CENTRE
THE CABBAGETOWN BOXING CLUB NEWSLETTER



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THE CABBAGETOWN BOXING CLUB 1972-2009
Thirty-seven Years of Service to the Sport of Boxing in Ontario and to the
Cabbagetown Community.

By **Peter E. Wylie and Henry M. Toran**

FROM SIMPLE BEGINNINGS IN 1972

The Cabbagetown Boxing Club was founded in 1972 in direct response to requests from local youth, backed by the community's need for creating activity based programs targeting youth at risk, aboriginal community members and low income families within the core area of the city.

The Club focused on working with local youth through a boxing program and successfully drew many of the most needy children in from the street and taught them discipline, self-confidence and respect for one another.

Presently the club's staff consists of the Head Coach, 6 male coaches, 1 female coach and a Sports Counsellor with a Sports Psychology background. All staff members are volunteers. The Cabbagetown Boxing Club is pleased to have the counselling services of a Specialized Sports Medical Doctor, a Sports Nutritionist and a Chiropractor as external consultants to the Club.

The good reputation of the club helped it recruit highly qualified coaches, who on a volunteer basis helped improve the club's training methods and its work with athletes of all ages. During the 1972 - 2008 period the club developed its own male and female coaches, many of whom continued as coaches in other clubs across Ontario. The Cabbagetown boxing program has produced such notables as World Boxing Champion, Shawn O'Sullivan; Johnny Kalbhenn, the 1989 Canadian Professional Champion and Canadian 1984 Olympian; and John Raftery, a bronze medallist in the 1981 World Championships.

Understanding the theoretical aspects of sport being more than just a physical activity showed the way to many improvements in the Club's training programs. Observing the application of sports theory and research in the work of foreign clubs led in 2004 to introducing Sports Psychology as an integral part of the Club's approach to training. Widening its range of available in-house professional capabilities, the Club could now open a Sports Clinic for its members. It also resulted in the Cabbagetown Boxing club's PTM – "Physical Fitness-Technical Skills-Mental Conditioning" Athletic Development Program.

This article aims to analyze and record the experience, gained over the years in building an effective sports organization. It encompasses the development of both coaches and athletes at the highest physical and technical performance levels, without neglecting the other important role that especially box clubs as community related organizations should fulfill: To enhance also the individual's personal development and the building of human values.

THE SPECIAL NATURE OF BOXING AS SPORT AND AS TRAINING IN LIFE SKILLS

Boxing is a combative sport where two combatants compete against each other using certain rules of physical engagement. Outsiders, and especially "instant experts" often have difficulties comprehending the complexity of the sport, and therefore boxing is often viewed as a violent, aggressive sport with little skill involved

However, contrary to such uninformed opinions, boxing is one of the most technically, physically and mentally taxing sports, requiring extensive physical as well as mental preparation to successfully compete. It is the combative nature of the sport that requires a vast array of emotions and qualities to face an opponent in the Boxing ring. Few sports require the athlete to battle with fear, pain, adrenaline, and a flurry of punches whilst also remaining level headed enough to "read" the opponent and be able to counter and attack his/her movements and tactics effectively.

The boxer's awareness that he is going into the ring and the realization that there is now way to avoid the stressful encounter will always lead in the athlete's physical / mental set-up to the system's basic fight or flight response – the body's "butterflies" reaction, the increase in overall stress levels, the performance anxiety and the "what if" thought processes.....the list of stress symptoms is long and varied, different from individual to individual.

And it is the boxer's confidence in her own physical and technical preparation and her mastery of mental skills to overcome the typical pre-fight symptoms that differentiate the experienced and calm winner from the over-stressed nervous looser in the ring. A recent analysis of such multiple world champions as Muhammad Ali and Evander Holyfield concluded that 80% of boxing is in the mind and to win a contest the mind has to be as well conditioned as the body

It is these specific characteristics that take boxing's significance as a skill far beyond the ring

The psychological environment of boxing replicates the stressful events in life that the average person has mostly difficulties dealing with and that can often have serious consequences in an individuals life. Everybody faces in their lives confrontational situations, or events that the individual envisions as unpleasant or threatening and dangerous. These can be job related events, family issues, interviews, exams and many others. The inability to handle the stress related to such events leads to the present general stress overload in people. According to health statistics over 75 % of doctor visits and the extensive use of medication are caused solely by the inability to handle daily stress

Boxers learn to deal with the stress related to performing in competition, to overcome their fears and keep "their cool" under physical and mental pressure. They are therefore better qualified than their untrained counterparts to deal with daily stresses and threatening situations. Interestingly, this fact has been recognized in the last decade by Japan business – senior executives were sent to participate in combative sports to learn to handle the pressures related to competitive business situations.

THE COACH – A MANY FACET FUNCTION

By lexicon definition Coaching is a method of directing, instructing and training a person or group of people, with the aim to achieve some goal or develop specific skills. This definition, however, does not fully express the important role Coaches play within a sport and the significant influence they can have on the participants they coach.

Coaching is about developing and improving people and their behaviour both as performers in a sport and as people in general. A Coach must be more than just a trainer helping participants to develop specific new skills. He must be also a manager, managing training schedules and athletic development plans for club members, she must be also a motivator, encouraging participants to do their best.

Good Coaches understand that the way they treat their trainees has a significant impact on the person. Calm encouragement can help even a mediocre athlete develop the proper mental attitude to achieve outstanding results. Disrespectful treatment will not only discourage even promising prospects from embracing the sport, it can lead in peoples' lives to serious damages by undermining their self-image and creating self-doubt.

These facts are a major guiding principle in the work of the Cabbagetown Coaching Team. Every Coach receives a list of 65 points characterizing the attitudes of a good Coach. Any problems in this area can be discussed by the Coach or any member with the Club's Counsellor.

CLUB MEMBERS – UNDERSTANDING THEIR PERSONALITY, THEIR AMBITIONS AND CONCERNS.

To successfully manage an individual's athletic development and achieve positive results we have to take into account a number of factors:

- a) The Motivation to get involved in a specific sport – b) Physical Capabilities – c) Mental Abilities d) Personality Features

Ignoring or misdiagnosing these four factors will in most cases lead to the typical negative consequences:

- a) the coach will deal with an unresponsive athlete, unwilling or not capable to follow instructions
- b) the athlete will resign from the sport or club, all work and personal efforts invested into that individual will be wasted
- c) such person will become a member with a negative attitude and undesirably influence others.

Physical and mental capabilities become fairly obvious when dealing with a person, dealing with the motivational factors in sport would go beyond the scope of this article and will be the topic of a future Newsletter.

Personality features are the complex of all the behavioural, temperamental, emotional and mental attributes that dictate a person's attitudes and behaviour. They are an important indicator as to a person's interaction with other people and the way he or she will react in various situations. Understanding a person's personality, what "makes that person tick", is also the key to partially answering the concerns of many coaches: "How do I motivate athletes and how do I know they will stay with the sport?"

The tool to establish an individual's personality is Profiling. Profiling in sports is basically the process of evaluating how the athlete behaves during the training process, before, during and after a competition. Some athletes will be able to objectively evaluate their own performance, recognize their strengths and admit their weaknesses. Others will refuse to see their own contribution to the negative outcome of a bout. They will blame the club for matching them up with the wrong opponent, the coach for insufficient instructions, the corner people for wrong advice and lack of attention. Evaluating an athlete's behaviour at such a point is obviously a reliable indicator of his or her attitude and will be a good gauge to predict future behaviour in a similar situation.

The environment in which a person grows up during the development phases from early childhood to adulthood is an important contributor to the forming of the personality. The Club has developed a schematic representation of the external factors that should be kept in mind when interviewing or training young athletes.

IMPROVING TRAINING METHODS AND SAFE PRACTICES

Sports training refers to specialized strategies and methods of exercise used in various sports to develop athletes and prepare them for performing in sporting events. Besides conventional exercise methods, various sports use also additional sports-specific training practices to develop in athletes the required type of physical and mental capabilities.

Boxers' training depends largely on the skill level of the boxer.

For beginners training will focus on basic conditioning and establishing the fundamentals. A minimal training routine might consist of learning how to hit the heavy bag, the speed bag, and the double end bag, as well as doing shadowboxing, skipping, calisthenics and jrunning; and an occasional sparring practice bout inside the ring.

For the advanced amateur or professional boxer, preparing for a competition or bout, training is much more stringent. This includes a strict daily exercise and diet regime and added daily running. Boxers will do the same basic gym routines as beginners, only more intensively, with additional running programs and conditioning to develop physical endurance, speed and coordination. Technical skills training and ring work becomes more intensive. At this point senior athletes will also start working with the Club's Sport Counsellor or Sports Psychologist on developing the necessary mental skills and mental fight preparation.

In line with the above principles, making quality of training and the safety of its members the focal point of its programs, the Cabbagetown Boxing Club has developed three major initiatives:

1. With the continuing focus on safe practices and proper guidance of athletes, based on their age and level of experience, the Club has instituted a new identification system. All members will now be required to attend and pass the Basic Tech-box Course, which will then put them into the Advanced Techbox Program. A final evaluation will be necessary for approval to be accepted into the more advanced programs and activities of the club. This will ensure that the skills of all athletes will be developed in line with their overall abilities
2. By creating a Sports Clinic as part of the Cabbagetown Boxing Club, the Club has taken a leadership role among Canadian sports clubs in the practical application of Sports Psychology as a service to its members. The Counsellor is available to all coaches and club members to discuss any personal or technical club-related issues. While all discussions with the Counsellor are strictly confidential, the Counsellor will set up, where necessary, a meeting between the coaches and members to clarify concerns. This approach has proven to be very beneficial.
3. Based on the ability to improve also the mental skills aspect of its athletes, in 2009 the Club plans to fully introduce the PTM training concept, which combines Physical Workouts with Technical Skills Training and Mental Conditioning. Pre-Fight Mental Adjustment and Post-Event Analysis are becoming a regular step in the training of all active athletes.

PRESENT ACTIVITIES – SERVING THE COMMUNITY AS PART OF THE CABBAGETOWN YOUTH CENTRE (CYC)

It is an important factor, that without the CYC's and the club's social support, mentoring and quality of training, many outstanding athletes, having been trained by the club, could have never achieved their level of excellence. But even with these results, the Cabbagetowne Boxing Club has not lost its original perspective. As part of the CYC's global focus on the Community, over 500 children and young adults attend the club's sports and recreation programs, to which they would otherwise not have access. Many of the former members have gone thanks to these programs on to responsible roles in their community, such as crown attorney, teachers and leading businessmen.

As part of the CYC's community focus the club expanded its activities in 2008 to encompass groups of people who are in great need of recreational activities such as boxing. These groups include youth at risk, aboriginal community members and low income families within the core area of the city. As part of the Youth Centre programs the Club is participating in the Communities In Action Funds promotions (CIAF) with the aim to expose 5,000 youth under the age of 18 years to the Sport of Boxing, and provides barrier-free access to 200 children and youth to safe and supervised sports programs.

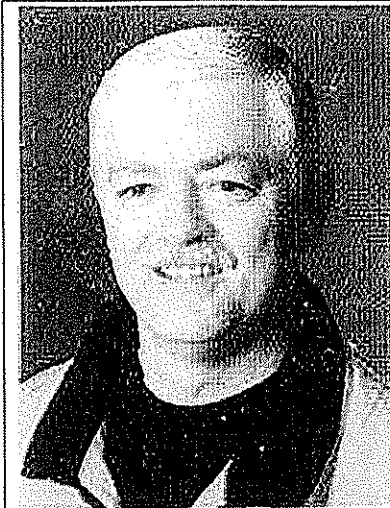


CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD COACH

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Has a good understanding of the job ➤ Has a reputation for competence with his/her own Peers. ➤ Is emphatic and understanding ➤ Is optimistic and patient ➤ Listens exceptionally well ➤ Is easy to talk to ➤ Is firm but fair ➤ Knows how to let athletes know objectively where they stand ➤ Gives instructions that are easy to understand. ➤ Explains the reasons for instructions & procedures. ➤ Gives his/her full attention during all phases of training and won't be distracted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Gives personal guidance & direction, especially when teaching something new. ➤ Operates well under pressure, or in rapidly changing conditions .. ➤ Can communicate annoyance in a calm and objective way. ➤ Has a strong sense of direction and urgency ➤ Preserves the individuality of his/her team members. ➤ Gives the freedom to develop own style, but continues to guide ➤ Motivates athletes to perform at their best level ➤ Is proud of those athletes s/he has developed |
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WHO'S WHO IN CABBAGETOWN BOXING

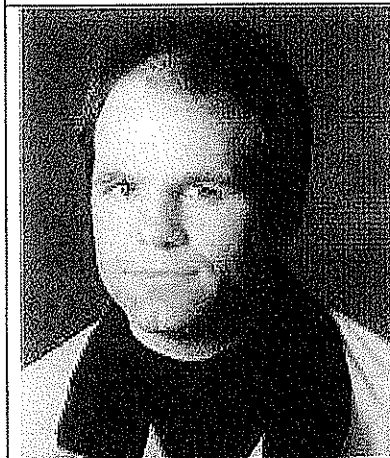
MEET THE CABBAGETOWN WINNING COACHING TEAM



Peter Wylie – President and Head Coach

Peter is the founder and President of The Cabbagetown Boxing Club and the Cabbagetown Youth Centre. He is a qualified Olympic coach, a former competitor, the 1983 Canadian Coach of the year. He trained such notable Canadian Boxers as Johnny Kalbhenn, Shawn O'Sullivan and John Raftery. Under his coaching the club developed over 50 athletes representing Canada internationally, 9 of those athletes became Canada's Olympic representatives. Under his tutelage many of these boxers have went on to successful professional boxing careers.

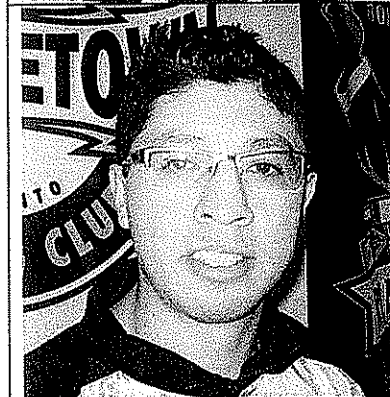
Peter focuses on the advancement of boxing from the global aspect of up-to-date training methods and research based athletic sports development. In 2004 he introduced applied Sports Psychology into the Clubs training programs, in 2008 he started the Coaches Personal Development Program.



Johnny Kalbhenn - Senior Coach/Trainer

Johnny represents the Head Coach in his absence. He holds a Level 3 National Coaching Certificate. He is the 1989 Canadian Professional Champion, a 1984 Olympian and the 1980-1984 Senior National Champion in the Lightweight class. He directs the Cadet and Boxercise programs.

Within the CPD program Johnny's professional focus is on the motivation of young athletes, on developing in young athletes personal features of discipline, self-confidence, comfort to work in a team setting, as well as physical and mental endurance in staying with the sport .

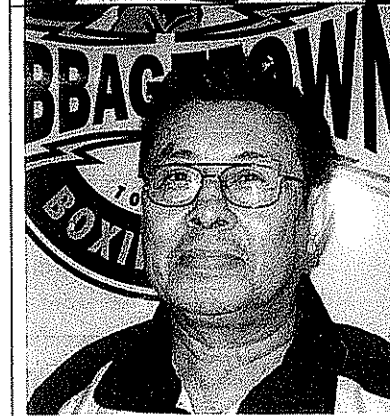


Rey Morales - Choach/Trainer

Rey Morales was born in Mexico. He is a three times Ontario Champion and Silver medallist at the 1999 Canadian National Championships and a Bronze Medallist at the US Ringside World Championships in 2001. Ray retired from professional boxing in 2007.

Rey holds a Level 3 Technical National Coaching Certificate as well a Degree in Psychology with an extra year of Sport Psychology at Ryerson University.

In the CPD program Rey focuses on the proper usage, handling and maintenance of sporting equipment.

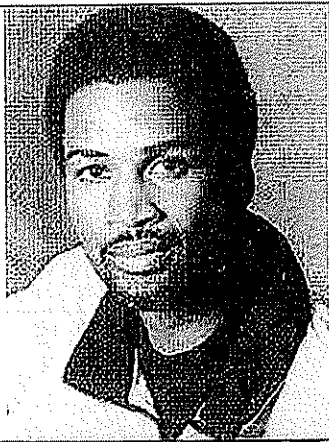


Carlos Varela Sr. –Coach/Trainer

Carlos holds a Level 3 National Coaching Certificate. He coaches both amateur and professional boxers. He also assists with Cadet, Junior and Senior Level Boxers, and the Boxercise Program.

Carlos has an extensive international background in boxing as professional boxer and coach, both in Nicaragua and Canada. He was the trainer of the triple Nicaraguan world champion Alexis Arguello.

In 2000 he was a participating coach in the USA Boxing Olympic Qualifier Coaches Clinic.



Nedrae Simmons - Coach/Trainer

Nedrae is a former world ranked professional boxer and a Lightweight champion of Canada. He works with both amateur and professional athletes and assists Johnny Kalbhenn. He has a Level 1 Coaching Certificate.

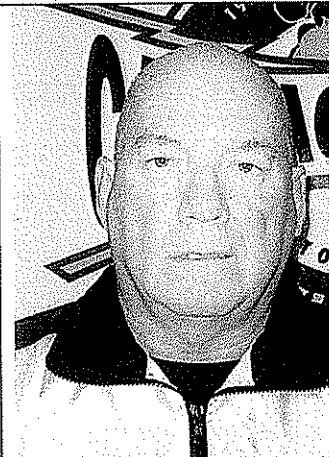
Nedrae is the Club's Ring Techniques Coach. With him athletes continue their routine floor training in real-life ring conditions. By actively sparring with Nedrae athletes are exposed to the ring environment, whereby Nedrae continues to instruct them, point out mistakes and implement improvements in techniques during rounds.



Heather Hopkins - Coach /Trainer

Heather Hopkins holds a Level One national Coaching Certificate and is a Gold Medallist in the Provincial Championship, and a multiple Silver and Bronze medallist in a number of Ontario Tournaments. In 2008 she represented Canada internationally against the World Champion from India Based on her in-depth knowledge of sports and her successful career in boxing, she has joined the Cabbagetown Coaches' Team and assists in coaching members of the cadet and junior programs

Heather has a University degree in music and is professionally skilled in assisting developing young aspiring musicians in their choice of instruments and music. She utilizes these skills as part of the Club's CPD Program, and devotes herself to new young female members during their start-up phase, as well as taking over the conditioning training of female athletes in all skill levels



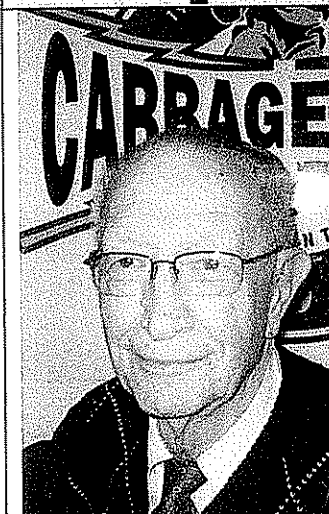
Lance (Bill) Campbell - Weight and Strength Trainer

Lance holds a Level 1 Coaching Certificate. He is an ASFA Certified Personal Trainer and an ASFA Certified Sports Nutritionist.

Lance was for 34 years a member of the Toronto Fire Fighting Department, where he held the position of Captain. He has over 25 years experience as a Strength and Conditioning Coach

Within the Club Lance specializes in Weight Training and Strength Conditioning with the focus on developing physical endurance, speed and coordination in athletes.

As part of the Clubs CPD program he focuses on transforming elements of sports theory and research into effective training practices, specific to the type of strength and physical output required in boxing.



Henry M. Toran, Ph.D., P.Eng. (Dipl.Psych/Soc.Work) Sports Counsellor

Henry is a Certified Stress Management Specialist, with a diploma in Relaxation Therapy. He is a member of the U.S. National Exercise and Sports Trainers' Association and the author of a number of publications and textbooks. Based on his studies on Corporate Stress he received in the USA a Ph.D.

Within the Club's Sports Clinic, Henry supplements the Club's physical and technical coaching programs with Mental Skills Training. He works with individual athletes in all areas of Stress Management and Cognitive Behaviour Modification; during Competitions he focuses on Pre-Fight Mental Conditioning and Post-Event Fight Analysis and Adjustments.