

Introduction

In February 1992, a phone call shook me from the rather languorous lifestyle I was leading as Manager of a corporate fitness center in Melbourne Australia. The World Bank in Washington DC was calling to offer me a position as Manger of their new Corporate Fitness Center.

After accepting the offer, I immigrated to the United States in September 1993. In February of 1994, I commenced studies in the Hopkins writing program. The following articles, were written over the ensuing 3 year period. They chronicle various events that have had a major impact on my life, and my passion for health, fitness and sports, particularly boxing.

Michael James,

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A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

It is 1977, in the land down under. I am a clerk with the Australian public service at the Ammunition Factory Footscray, in the Western suburbs of Melbourne. Victoria. It is my first job after high school, but after two years my career is coming to a grinding halt.

Grinding is probably not an apt word as it implies activity and activity is not an easy concept to grasp for an Aussie public servant in the mid 1970's. Of Course there are some people, like my boss Frank, who think they put in an honest day's work. Unfortunately he doesn't think much of my work ethic.

I can't understand why. I am in charge of ordering canteen supplies and I have made some bloody momentous decisions. Changing the dessert from orange to lime Jell-O has required lengthy negotiations and many sleepless nights. Fortunately green is my favorite color, so now my ammunition factory comrades dine sumptuously on luscious lime lime jelly crystals !!

Not only do I have superior decision making skills I am also great at team building .
Who else can organize all the beer for

the office parties, drinks most of it, and then express maudlin devotion and undying love to anyone else still there at 3 a.m.? Plus I always have the highly original, dance around the office with the lamp shade over the head trick.

Our Manager Frank just doesn't appreciate my unique skills. He is a typical Aussie macho male of the 1950's. He reckons he is 5 ft 10 inches, but that must have been measured with his umbrella up. He's no more than 5 ft 5 inches and his height, width, and girth are all the same. A pock marked face, bulbous red wine nose, greasy, black hair, and dandruff laced safari jacket, straining to cover an Idi Amin pot belly, have delayed his aspirations for a male modeling career.

But, underneath this gruff exterior, Frank is really a "New Age" Aussie male. Last week he summoned me to his office and called me "a lazy, fat, booze ridden bludger, with no prospects and the morals of an alley cat." I took exception to this. At an umbrella-less 5 ft 9 inches and 230 pounds, I didn't think I'm that fat.

I remained calm and showed that I too am a real "New Age" Aussie male. I called him, "a decrepit 50 year old, little fat, acne scarred turd, with the brains, looks and body odor of a bush wombat." He took that calmly enough, but when I added "you're too shit frightened to go out into the real world and earn an honest living ya overpaid fat cat," he got upset. Frank threatened to report me to the public service administrative tribunal.

I sought wise counsel from my closest mate “Mad Maurie.” Maurie is the office union rep who knows all the rules and how to break them. He’s a big bloke who doesn’t mind a beer and a blue (fight). Maurie had been through the tribunal before.

A couple of months ago he came back drunk, after a long lunch. Nothing unusual but Maurie then proceeded to insult two bosses, and knock another over the afternoon tea trolley, turning the office into a sea of pavlovas, fruit buns and boiling Lipton’s tea. Maurie then had to front the dreaded Administrative Tribunal.

A forlorn, repentant Maurie had this to say about his ordeal “Mate, it was great”, Maurie said. “The tribunal found me guilty and fined me one dollar under some 1940’s rule they haven’t bothered to change. Abusing three of the bastards is the best value for a dollar I’ve ever had. Tell that little fat turd Frank to go to buggery. Otherwise you can always try the old workers comp trick.”

Maurie is the factory “role model” on how to cheat the worker's compensation scheme by taking months of paid leave with bogus work site injuries. A robust football player on the weekends, Maurie always seems to have knee soreness that mysteriously turn into major injuries on Monday mornings.

But, this ruse came to an end the previous year after his quarterly visit to the public service doctor. After grimacing through the examination and getting another 3 months off work, Maurie visited the nearby Powell Hotel to further anesthetize the pain. The next day the doctor

got a call from the publican asking “who left these bloody crutches with an Ammunition Factory Footscray logo in the public bar?”

I listened intently to Maurie’s advice, but decided against taking the worker's comp route. My knees were fine, and besides, what could I claim worker's comp for, terminal acne? I also decided to forego the administrative tribunal. I resigned and thumbed my nose at the establishment. They could find another patsy to do their dirty work. “Order your own lime Jell-O,” I sneered.

What was I to do? I was twenty-one years of age with no job, no college degree and no prospects. I went on the dole (welfare). But I didn’t waste my time. I embarked on a rigorous physical fitness program and turned my two hundred and thirty pound beer fat body, and pimply profile, into two hundred and twenty-eight pounds, of rippling manhood. Like a typical inexperienced body-builder, I concentrated solely on the upper body, paying no attention to my legs or what I ate. So, two hundred and twenty-five pounds, was bulky upper body with three pound sparrow legs for support. Baggy track pants worked wonders in hiding the legs, and if pulled high enough, covered love handles large enough for a sumo wrestler.

After 6 months on the dole I thought I should look for a new career. I decided to apply for a job as a gym instructor at a new health club called Lifestyle. I spent half my day in the gym, so why not get paid for it. It was a bold move because I had no experience or qualifications. What I did have was plenty of brash confidence, and cheek. Maurie gave me moral support. “Give it a burl mate, what have you to lose except your pride” he said.

This was the early 1970's and the fitness industry was young. I sprinkled my application letter with plenty of pseudo scientific jargon like cardio respiratory fitness, anaerobic threshold, and proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation. That was enough to get me an interview with Robert Ward, the manager of a new "Lifestyle Fitness Center" opening later in the year.

I arrived at the interview in my best 1970's disco, three piece suit. The exaggerated wide shoulders made me look even bigger, and hid my ample midriff and lovehandles. I looked like George Reeves in the Superman TV show.

Ward was the epitome of 1970's garishness. He was all biceps and blow wave, with a John Travolta "Saturday night fever" smile and a hairstyle an ax couldn't break. "Welcome to the Lifestyle family" he said, offering his hand with an exaggerated firm grip that still felt like a wet, slimy haddock. "At Lifestyle we want to promote a club that all the family can enjoy. Where do you see your role in the lifestyle family?" He asked.

My bullshit indicators were on full alert, but who was I to complain? Why was I there in the first place? "Yes I think you have a great vision at Lifestyle, something that has been lacking in Australian society. "Robert, I'd like to be part of that vision, I want to help Lifestyle become the premiere health club in Australia." I said this with a straight face, and waited for the lightning bolt to strike me down.

Ward was impressed, or realized he had just met an equally adept bullshit artist. He offered me his haddock hand and told me to report for staff training sessions in a fortnight. I shook Ward's hand. Surprisingly, I still had all of my fingers.

I still wasn't employed though. I had to impress the Lifestyle directors at the staff training sessions. During the two week hiatus, I prepared myself mentally and physically. I read all I could on fitness and continued with my rigorous training program of weight lifting and nutritional supplements. These supplements included a 6 pack of Fosters Lager on week nights and double on weekends. Strangely enough, I still couldn't get rid of my excess weight. "It's my metabolism," I convinced myself. An excuse I would hear many times, from many different people, over the next 30 years.

I arrived at the staff training session in a suitably baggy track suit to cover my ample avoirdupois. Michael Hunt, a former Australian Olympic swimmer, now a Lifestyle director was the trainer. The group was a motley bunch of stragglers. There was Bruce, an ex Aussie rules football player turned peace loving hippie, Ben a gentle soul who had the body of Tarzan and the manners of Jane, and Sue a thirty something secretary also looking for a career change.

We introduced ourselves and began chatting informally, all of us trying to impress each other with our vast fitness knowledge. When Ben posed the question "What is more fattening, calories or carbohydrates?" I knew brain power wasn't going to be a deciding factor for employment.

Michael Hunt then began a short talk on exercise technique. After a brief demonstration he called for a volunteer to demonstrate proper lifting form. Somehow it fell on me to be the guinea pig. "OK Mike show us how it's done," Hunt said. All eyes were upon me as I took of

my jacket. My pants were high enough to choke me, but the stares and smirking faces made me realize my disguise wasn't working.

I approached the barbell with my arms out at right angles, trying hard to accentuate my broad back and hide my even broader butt. The barbell only weighed 40 pounds but I had to make it look good. I squatted down, swung it swiftly to my chest, then heard a large ripping sound. "Oh shit, my fat arse has split my pants," I thought. "How embarrassing."

I had actually torn my thigh muscle, and it hurt like hell. I limped off muttering that I was sore from "squatting 330 pounds this morning." The others were all too polite to laugh.

Even with this excerpt from Australia's Funniest home videos, I was still able to bullshit my way through the rest of the training sessions and obtain a part time job. Fortunately, I had enough self insight to realize that I couldn't do this forever. Over the next 18 years I earned a degree in physical education, lost my excess weight and competed successfully in Australian rules football, squash and distance running.

I started of as a fitness instructor and progressed up to managing Australia's largest corporate fitness center. In 1993 I was offered a position managing the World Bank Fitness Center in Washington DC. I accepted the offer and have had the most exciting, fulfilling four years of my life. I have met people from countries and cultures I had not even heard of.

My career in Fitness Management has taken me around Australia amd around the world. Hopefully the insights I share here can help a while range of people. From the beginning exerciser to the person looking for a career in the Fitness Industry

Boxacise, Boxing Minus the Lumps and Bumps ? Well, Almost!

My first experience with boxing came when I was 13 years old, in my home town of Melbourne Australia. I was a shy kid who avoided physical or verbal confrontations. I was big for my age, due to what Doctors now call, an “advanced adolescent growth spurt.” This gave me a pimply profile and beer fat body, which led to taunts and ridicule in that most vicious ring of all, the school play ground.

I guess there would be prettier sights than a five feet eight inch, 180 pound, 13 year old in short, waist high choker pants, with lily-white legs of speckled freckles, gray suit coat bursting at the seams and school cap perched precariously on a mop of blond hair. Blonde hair that accentuated a classic Aussie boof head. This large head, and oversized body, helped me acquire the nickname Mugsy, after a popular Australian comic strip character of the time.

I went to school at St. Bernard’s, a local Christian Brothers college. Our sports teacher, Mr. Telford decided to introduce boxing into our PT classes. In our first class, he threw me a pair of boxing gloves. My class mates couldn't stop laughing. The thought of clumsy, placid Mugsy, actually donning gloves, was comical. When Mr.Telford announced Peter Barrett as

my opponent, the laughter turned to hysteria. Barrett was the class bully, so everyone thought I was in for a hiding. But, I wasn't scared, nervous maybe, but certainly not shaking in my pre Reebok running shoes.

I shaped up in orthodox stance, right foot back, balanced on the balls of my feet, left hand out at eye height, elbow tucked into my ribs and right hand guarding my face. I still remember Mr.Telford's surprised look. I was the original Walter Mitty. I had lived boxing in my head often enough to know the right stance. Unlike other kids who dreamed of being Aussie rules football players, I was shutting Cassius Clay's mouth or slaying that big, ugly, ex convict, Sonny Liston.

My opponent Barrett, was the archetype, fiery, Irish/Aussie red head. In later years he became a renowned pub bouncer. Barrett came out swinging like a barn yard gate. Out of five punches, one landed on the right side of my mouth. I can still feel the exhilaration. The salty odor of leather laced with sweat, and the stinging sensation it leaves in the mouth, still excites me. My adrenaline was pumping and I forgot being shy and placid. My left jab landed flush on blood nut's nose. I followed up with an overhead right to his eye that sent him crashing to the floor. The smacking sound of my gloved fists landing on Barrett's pale flesh was only silenced by the thumps of my stunned classmates' jaws, dropping to the floor.

Wisely Mr.Telford brought a halt to the contest. "Righto you blokes that'll be enough," he yelled. After tending to Barrett's blood nose, black eye and shattered ego, Mr.Telford made

us shake hands. Naturally, in all boys school, the word soon spread. I was never picked on after that.

Buoyed by this success, I practiced boxing with whoever was willing over the next couple of years. I suppose I had more than average talent for boxing, but I didn't have the confidence or desire to pursue it much further. I had numerous sparring matches which turned into real fights but I never engaged in actual organized contests. These were rare in Australia for kids of my age. Besides I was very dubious about boxing and looked on it as another world, full of gangsters and tough guys. Even though some older kids encouraged me to get some real tuition, I was still placid Mugsy, not given to street fights or, I'm proud to say, bullying other kids. I couldn't imagine myself entering into the threatening world of sweaty gyms full of men with eyes brimming with bad intentions.

My boxing was by no means a Stallonesque Hollywood movie script. When I was 15, I had an impromptu sparring match with a state champion that brought me back to earth. Peter Rogers also had an accelerated growth spurt. The trouble was, his resulted in broad muscular shoulders, bulging biceps and the athletes classic v-shaped upper body. He acquired this muscularity through regular exercise and real amateur boxing contests. Again, once the gloves were on, I lost all my shyness. I decided to, as they say in boxing parlance, "take the fight up to him." I threw a well timed, hard, three punch combination, that snapped his head back. Rogers then bent over at the waist in what I thought was a sign of being hurt. How was I to know he was adopting a classic peek-a-boo style, made famous in later years by Mike Tyson? He then landed

looping left and rights flush on my mouth. Even now, 24 years later, I can see his fists landing on my face and my mouth guard flying out at right angles.

Once again, a teacher came to the rescue. Even with the room spinning in all directions and blood oozing from my lips, I feigned being unhurt and stayed in fighting stance. I still felt exhilarated. It's a feeling that is hard to explain. Maybe he was too good, (I still won't totally admit defeat) but something inside me, be it ego or youth, wanted to continue. Punches hurt and can do some pretty horrifying damage, but the heat of battle does strange things to the male psyche.

This Waterloo didn't really discourage me. As I got older the fascination for boxing simply faded. My sporting interest turned towards Aussie Rules Football. Other than a cursory interest, boxing didn't have much place in my life. Little did I know, that twenty years later, I would be the teacher breaking up a fight.

Tuesday, March 18, 1997. It is 1 p.m. I am standing in front of 20 female and 15 male members of the World Bank fitness center. Over the next hour I will urge, cajole and sometimes even provoke these people, to "sweat, strain and never surrender."

Rather than perform grapevines, v-steps, and other fancy step aerobics routines, these World Bankers will put up their dukes and throw jabs, hooks and uppercuts. I am their instructor for one of the most popular fitness classes of the 90's, boxacise.

Sugar Ray Leonard, Mike Tyson, and that dastardly Peter Rogers are conspicuous by their absence, but the intensity and desire of the class is phenomenal. The theme from Rocky plays in

the background, while punching bags are pummeled, skipping ropes twirl and speed bags rattle. A loud, piercing whistle, ends the two minute round. After a ten second break, the gasping boxacisers move on to the next numbered station.

There are thirty stations incorporating traditional boxing apparatus in a circuit training format. At another station, members practice punching drills by hitting my heavily padded gloves and mid section for two minutes. Some of the more regular, experienced boxacisers will do some light and supposedly, “non contact” sparring.

At the start of the next round, while I take sixty-two year old Jim through some pad work, two male participants decide to practice some punches and light sparring drills. Suddenly the light sparring becomes competitive. The punches are no longer for practice. The smacking sound of leather on flesh is unmistakable. My role immediately turns from supervisor to peacemaker. I step directly between the two belligerent, brawling bankers, and order them to de glove and shake hands. Thankfully they adhere to my directions.

My assistant Abner, skillfully deflects the rest of the classes' attention by encouraging them to continue. “Come on guys suck it up, keep punching, don’t stop now,” he yells. The clash is over in a matter of seconds. We have avoided an unpleasant scene.

After the class, the two potential pugilists offer very qualified apologies of the, “I’m sorry but you started it,” variety. Now I can think back at the absurdity of it all. These two weren’t schoolboys. One is a 45 year old lawyer, the other a 51 year old systems analyst. “Maybe this is

why we have wars,” I say to myself . It is ironic. Twenty two years after my scuffle with Rogers, on another side of the world, I had become a nineties version of Mr.Telford.

How did I come to be on the other side of the world teaching boxacise? It’s funny how earlier parts of your life return to you in later years. Fifteen years after my encounter with Peter Rogers, boxing made the proverbial “comeback into my life.” At thirty years of age, my life had changed dramatically. The shy overweight adolescent who flirted with boxing, was now a Physical Education graduate, and Manager of the Coles Myer Fitness center .

In 1988, on a sultry Melbourne Summer afternoon, life took one of those ironic twists called fate. I picked up the phone and was greeted by the startled voice of my assistant Cathie. “Mike, there’s a guy here named Des who wants to talk to you about something called boxacise,”

Des was a short (five feet seven inches) dapper, well-spoken gentleman in his mid 50’s. A slightly flat nose, and thick eyebrows, were visible trademarks of a past boxing career. The “old pug,” was former Australian Olympic representative, Des Duiguid. I knew something about his boxing history ,but still had to be convinced about his concept of selling boxing training to the general public. My memories of fistic encounters with Barrett and Rogers were still there.

My logical, university degree background, said that this type of aggression was senseless and wrong. However, my deep basic instincts could not help but relive the excitement of the one on one physical combat of my youth. Duiguid assured me boxacise would only be boxing training with no physical contact. This assurance and Duiguid’s charismatic personality, made it difficult to refuse his offer of a six week trial period.

During these six weeks, Duiguid began teaching me the finer points of boxing. I soon realized that my previous boxing knowledge was very basic. I learned more about footwork, balance, and use of the boxing apparatus. I began sparring again but this time with a different mind set from my youth. While I still reveled in the competition I was hesitant about hitting people. My social conditioning now told me it wasn't right to hurt someone.

Boxacise proved very popular at Coles Myer and at other fitness centers. Duiguid was now 62 years of age. He needed help teaching at the many health clubs wishing to offer boxacise. With my confidence growing, I began to help with the instruction.

Now, eight years later, my career has taken me to the World Bank Fitness Center in Washington DC. Teaching boxacise has been a very enlightening experience. I have learned much about human nature. Boxacise is the most popular class on the World Bank's extensive (60 classes per week) program. There are many variations of boxacise. Most fitness clubs follow an aerobic class format, combining some boxing moves with aerobic routines. Because I have some boxing background, and absolutely no music sense, my classes have a far more intense boxing flavor. The aim of boxacise is to provide the fitness benefits of boxing. These benefits include, superior levels of aerobic fitness, strength, muscular endurance and hand eye coordination without (hopefully), the lumps and bumps of real boxing. It is not a self defense or pure boxing class. This is where difficulties can sometimes arise.

Violent physical clashes are very rare, but they certainly get me thinking. I wonder about the aggressive nature of men. I have never in eight years of teaching had to break up two

women. (Although two of the hardest punches I have ever taken were from women who caught me off guard and accidentally punched me on the chin.)

What is it about boxing that brings out the best fitness, courage, skill and sometimes the worst, uncontrolled violence, ego and belligerence in men? Some people accuse me of teaching people too much boxing and of promoting aggression. Should I tone down my boxercise classes to avoid these confrontations?

It is only when sparring becomes involved that a fine line has to be drawn. Clashes can be avoided by banning any form of sparring. But my experiences with boxing and inside knowledge of the aggressive male, make me feel that this is unrealistic and in some ways unfair. As an instructor, you must expect that highly motivated, competitive men, will want to test what they have learned.

While my aggressiveness has been tempered by advancing years, I can still recall the exhilaration I felt with my first boxing experiences. Most of the people I teach have not had this experience. I can understand their enthusiasm. In some ways the clash between these two brawling bankers was a good thing. It makes my warnings about being careful gain more credibility. It also makes people realize that punches hurt, and that real boxing is not like a Hollywood movie where the hero escapes unscathed. There is nothing glamorous about a black eye or bloody nose.

It certainly makes my job harder. I have to observe and communicate clearly and firmly. I am taking a risk, but have decided to back my judgment on knowing when to call a halt if proceedings get too rough. Sparring is only for those who want it. No one is forced into it..

Observation is the key. There are a number of signs I look for. I look at a persons eyes before I decide if they should spar. I have come to instinctively know, the glare of an individual with a violent disposition. It is an almost deadpan stare. The eyes are set deep back in the head, with tiny pupils, and no sign of fear. In some individuals it can be chilling and down right frightening. Mike Tyson comes to mind.

Onlookers can be another problem. Spectator's comments can often incite participants into real fighting. I discourage spectators from attending and shouting "expert" advice.

What does this all say about men and their aggressive natures? It is not all men. Many men abhor boxing, and violence in any form. Others are content to participate in boxacise without sparring. But it would be folly to suggest that all men should be like this. It is part of most men's natures, to see who is the fastest, strongest and most skillful. Boxing when properly supervised helps harness these aggressions in a controlled atmosphere. Boxacise also serves this purpose in a less aggressive, more accessible environment.

The most interesting insight I have gained concerns the learning capacities of Males versus Females. More aptly it is the willingness to learn. Having taught on both sides of the world, to people of many different nationalities, it is clear to me, that women are far better at learning a skill than men. I believe this is due to their absence of ego and aggression. Men are

more likely to give up, if they can't master a skill like skipping and speed ball. Women generally persist until they master the skill, even if they look foolish during the learning curve. Looking foolish and clumsy during the learning phase is, too much for many male egos to take. Reputed tough guys often walk out of a class with their ego deflated. They never return.

Boxacise has become part of my life now. I have thoroughly enjoyed it, but still balk at taking it much further. Boxacise is fun. Punching bags and speed balls don't hit back. Today, I now have no desire to test my abilities in a ring or any other place.

In Australia, I was the fitness advisor to the Australian Academy of boxing, the accreditation body for boxacise instructors. I was often asked to help train professional boxers. I declined. Deep down, I am still that placid, overweight, 13 year old. Sweaty gyms, full of tough guys with staring eyes, brimming with bad intentions, is not the place for me.

Unlike Marlon Brando, I'd rather be "a pretender than a contender" any day.

Mr.Telford would be proud.

Des Duiguid -- Always a Contender

Following boxing's finest traditions, Des Duiguid, Australian lightweight representative in the 1960 Rome Olympics, has his own "I wuz robbed" story. While preparing for his light weight quarter final bout, Duiguid was sent into spar with team mate, Australian Light heavyweight representative, Tony Madigan. "The selectors wanted someone fast so Madigan could sharpen up for his next fight with the sensational Cassius Clay," he recalls.

"I was giving Madigan all sorts of trouble, boxing his ears off. Being thirty pounds lighter, I was too quick for him," Duiguid continued. "I was also a cheeky bugger and decided to give him some trash talk. You're no good, Clay will kill you, you big girl, I said."

Towards the end of the second round, the heavier Madigan, decided Duiguid had said far too much. "I started repeating my insults, got up to 'you're no...' Next thing I know, I was lying down with a crowd around me," he said, his eyes gazing upwards, feigning unconsciousness.

Duiguid was also minus two front teeth, with a broken nose, and severely depleted hopes for his own fight the next day. Duiguid fought his quarter final in a daze. He fought well, but lost on a split decision to the eventual gold medalist, John Zselini from Hungary.

Duiguid is not bitter. “I got to meet Cassius Clay. At least he gave Madigan what he deserved a couple of days later,” he said with a half smile, half grimace.

Looking back at the 1960 Olympics, Duiguid feels that he didn’t dream hard enough. “It was such a struggle to get selected. I thought I had achieved everything and didn’t concentrate enough on my boxing. I really think I could have won a medal,” he said his face now a furrowed brow of lost opportunities. “Sparring with Madigan probably didn’t help either,” he quipped.

Boxing contemporaries of the time agree. Darrell Hemoa, a New Zealand feather weight who competed at Rome, feels that “Des should have at least fought in the final, he was that good.” Derek Johns, a British boxer at the games, says that “Des was a classic counter puncher, with terrific hand speed, and was always in good physical condition.”

Fellow Australian team mate John Famechon agrees, albeit from a slightly different perspective. Famechon feels that Duiguid definitely had the ability to win gold, but that his stubbornness and rivalry with Tony Madigan got in the way. “Des and Madigan were the elder statesmen of our boxing team” Famechon explained. “Des was a country boy. He mixed freely with everyone. Madigan was an Ivy League type who seemed to look on boxing as being somewhat distasteful, even though he was extremely good at it,” Famechon said. Duiguid and Madigan often clashed over trivial matters. They were really battling to see whose pride and ego would prevail.

The selectors loved the “all Australian boy” Madigan, and what better way to stop the upstart Duiguid than have him spar with Madigan? Cassius Clay was the perfect foil to thwart

Duiguid's quest for the Olympic gold. "Forget what some old timers tell you," Famechon says "Madigan didn't have a hope in hell of beating Cassius Clay. They sent in Des supposedly to get him (Madigan) used to fighting someone fast. It was really a ruse to teach Des a lesson," claims Famechon.

After the 1960 Olympics, Duiguid boxed sporadically for four more years. He retired in 1964, at the age of 33, after being knocked out in his last two fights. "I knew that it was time to retire and fight life's battles," he said. His 16 years of boxing were totally amateur. Australian athletes received no financial support from their government.

It had been a long and hard road to the Rome Olympics for Des Duiguid. He was born in 1930, in the small Australian country town of Bendigo. His dark complexion and mixed ethnic background (Aboriginal mother and Scottish father) often resulted in racist taunts and discrimination. Discrimination that he believes, later cost him a place in the Australian boxing team, for the 1956 Melbourne Olympics.

Duiguid's boxing career began in 1945 at the age of 14. After receiving a thrashing at the hands of an older bully, he joined the Bendigo Boys club to learn boxing. He was a very quick learner. By 16 he was state champion. At 23, he had already won three national light-weight titles. Three years later, in 1954, he represented Australia at the Vancouver Commonwealth Games where he won a bronze medal.

“That bully is still living in Bendigo and is now a successful businessman,” Duiguid recalls. “I never did get revenge, but every time I see him, I thank him for introducing me to boxing and the Olympic and Commonwealth games,” he adds.

His recollections of these Commonwealth Games reveal the irascible, fun-loving side of Duiguid’s personality. “There I was, a young lad from country Victoria on my first trip away from home” he said with wide, sparkling eyes mimicking the excitement he experienced 40 years ago. “All I could see was beautiful women from all over the world,” he continued.

“A team mate asked me, ‘How do you think you’ll go Des?’ I looked around and said I reckon I’ll go terrific mate! But I wasn’t talking about the boxing!” Duiguid said with a raucous laugh.

A team mate at the Vancouver games, Lionel Rose, recalls Duiguid’s training regimen. “It was really a testament to his ability that he got a bronze medal,” Rose said. “Des spent most of his time in the arms of a very attractive Jamaican woman runner rather than training, but that was just his way. He was very popular with the ladies and everyone else for that matter,” Rose said.

After the ‘54 Games, Duiguid was given an opportunity rarely available to Australian athletes in the 1950’s. Harry Miller, a wealthy American entrepreneur, was impressed by Duiguid’s pugilistic talent. Miller sponsored Duiguid to live and train in Los Angeles.

Duiguid spent two years in the United States. “I worked as a barman, cleaner, and jack-of-all-trades in Miller’s nightclub in the heart of Hollywood.” This was an exciting time for

Duiguid. Even though the two countries were allies in World War 2, Americans knew very little about Australia in the mid 1950's. Duiguid used this to his advantage. "The Yanks didn't know what to make of me," he said. "Here I was, a colored person but nothing like an African American or a Native American, with a strange accent and brash confident manner," he said. Duiguid's unique physical features, personality, and boxing ability made him an instant celebrity. "I got to meet many movie stars including James Dean," he said.

Duiguid's sojourn in Los Angeles had some tense moments. "I remember Miller assigned one of his lackeys to show me the ropes of his night club operation," Duiguid said. Apparently Miller's lackey had a brash New York manner, that clashed with Duiguid's fiercely independent Australian nature. "He kept ordering me around and criticizing everything I did. I was a pretty innocent kid who up to that time had never had a drink, so I knew nothing about working in a night club," Duiguid explained.

After a week Duiguid was starting to lose his patience. "One day I was sweeping the floors and the New Yorker orders me to start tallying up the money in the cash register. Next thing ya know he starts showing off in front of his buddies."

Duiguid's chest swells with pride, and his voice adopts a distinctly more pronounced Aussie accent when he describes what happened next. "The little twerp yells at the top of his voice 'Duiguid you black bastard, you can't work a bar, you can't count money, what the fuck can you do?'" "I can fight" I said, and threw a straight right cross that landed flush on his jaw and knocked him out for half an hour."

Duiguid thought this would end his time with Miller and prepared to head straight back to Australia. Fortunately Miller had other ideas. He fired the New Yorker instead. Even after a boxing career spanning 130 bouts, Duiguid still cherishes that right cross as his most satisfying punch. It was a precursor to his many future battles with racism and overbearing authority.

Duiguid continued boxing while in Los Angeles and went on to fight in the National Golden Gloves championships, where he reached the quarter finals. “I was offered the chance to turn professional,” he said, “but I turned it down. They wanted me to throw a few fights, and some of the characters hanging around were not the type I’d like to bring home to meet my mom.”

Duiguid decided to return home to Australia in February 1956, the year Melbourne was to host the Olympic games. It was here that Duiguid suffered one of the biggest blows of his life. This blow wasn’t delivered in the ring, but by Australian Olympic officials, he claims were jealous of his overseas success. Duiguid feels that “the officials weren’t willing to tarnish their lily-white image, by including a colored boxer in the Olympic team.”

This was a time when the “White Australia Policy” was an official government legislation that permeated all of Australian society. Although Duiguid defeated the national champion in the trials, the selectors chose only five white men out of an eligible eight boxers. All three who missed selection, were colored.

After this disappointment Duiguid drowned his sorrows in alcohol. “Just like in boxing, I was a champion at that too,” he said. “I wasn’t happy unless I was the drunkest at the party, the

bloke who annoyed all the women and challenged all the guys,” he said with a furtive look of embarrassment.

A sudden revelation didn't make him change his ways. It was the simple act of shaving. “One morning I looked at myself in the mirror, and saw a bleary eyed, overweight, drunken bum,” he said. “I realized that I had let those officials beat me. From that day on, I never had another drink.”

After this lost year, Duiguid renewed his enthusiasm for boxing. He was now aiming for a place in the 1960 Olympics team. But this was no fairy tale Hollywood fight picture where the hero returns to glory, surrounded by adoring crowds. Des Duiguid was no Sylvester Stallone.

“I had to become pretty ruthless,” he said. “It wasn't, and still isn't my nature, but I had to step on toes and become totally focused.” Usually Duiguid wouldn't punish his opponents unnecessarily, but in the lead up to the Olympics his attitude changed and he showed no mercy. “I was always a fierce competitor, but I never wanted to really hurt anyone. I still think of the pain I inflicted on some blokes in my quest for the Olympics, but you have to understand,” he continued. “Back then, in Australia, colored people had to prove themselves even more than they do today.” The jaws and noses a boxer breaks are held up as trophies by the more violent protagonists of the sport. For Duiguid, they were an unfortunate means to an end.

Duiguid's fierce desire and focus, helped him compile an undefeated record. Even a racist officialdom could not ignore this achievement. At thirty years of age, Duiguid was chosen

to represent Australia in the 1960 Olympics. The eventual gold medalist defeated him in the quarter finals, albeit with a few helping left and right hands from Tony Madigan.

In the 37 years since his Olympic experience, Duiguid has had more than Tony Madigan and racist boxing officials to contend with. There has been a successful career in insurance, marriage, the birth of two daughters and a son, a bitter divorce that left him bankrupt, and a recent life-threatening stroke. Yet, through all of these life experiences, boxing has never been far away for Des Duiguid.

After retiring from boxing in 1964, Duiguid had to find a way to support his wife and young family. Fortunately a friend in a large insurance company offered him employment as a salesman.

Duiguid took to selling insurance as enthusiastically as he threw punches in the boxing ring. His personable demeanor, and genuine warmth, were a pleasant change for people who usually ran for cover when they heard the term, “insurance salesman.”

“The hard sell, sign on the dotted line, don’t worry about the fine print, wasn’t part of my repertoire,” he said. His unique disarming approach and the many contacts he made as an Olympic representative paid dividends. Within three years Duiguid was the leading insurance salesman in Australia. He still kept in touch with boxing by training the Victorian police cadets and offering advice to the occasional promising amateur.

Duiguid feels that the confidence he gained from boxing was the reason for his success. “Nothing frightened me,” he said. “After what I had been through, knocking on doors and approaching people was no big deal,” he said, shrugging his shoulders nonchalantly.

Success in insurance brought him considerable wealth with all the trappings, including two homes, swimming pools, and expensive schools for his children. But a lackadaisical approach to paying income tax, and a bitter divorce in the mid 1980’s ,saw him lose it all.

“I was never a financial wizard,” Duiguid admits. These financial troubles and the divorce ultimately led to bankruptcy. He prefers not to comment on this part of his life other than to say, “When the divorce came I just wanted out. I gave up all my assets without a thought.” Concerning his wife he says, “Well, she gave me three beautiful children and wonderful memories, I prefer to keep it at that.”

When pressed Duiguid admits that his former wife never really accepted his boxing. “It was difficult for her,” he admits. “We would be walking down the streets of Bendigo and I always seemed to be greeted warmly by all the town roughnecks, who knew me from boxing.” Boxing’s inherent attraction for unseemly characters, and the time Duiguid spent away from home as a competitor and trainer, helped contribute to the marital tensions.

By the time of his divorce, Duiguid was in his late fifties. Insurance sales was now a far more competitive field, dominated by large companies with younger and more highly educated sales people. Duiguid’s income was not going to be nearly as high as it was when he first started selling insurance.

This time he was backed into a corner with someone far more powerful than Tony Madigan throwing the punches. His opponent was bankruptcy. He faced a bleak future. There was three children, alimony payments, and his own living expenses to support. Would Des Duiguid become the archetype broken down boxer, stumbling and mumbling his way through life, always looking for a hand-out? No, once again boxing came to the rescue.

Even with his material losses, Duiguid still had his most vital assets: health, fitness, and a positive attitude. “Boxing taught me to ride with the punches and pick myself up when I was down,” he said. Duiguid had no desire to train boxers for meager earnings in the dubious world of professional boxing. He saw another avenue to exploit his teaching skills and years of experience.

Duiguid always kept himself in good physical condition. “I never pumped iron, did Step aerobics or joined fancy gyms,” he said. “I figured if boxing training could help a man of my age keep fit, why couldn’t it be adapted for everyone?” He then came up with the Boxacise concept, an exercise regimen using boxing moves and equipment to achieve greater fitness and coordination.

Duiguid used his years of ring experience, and the confidence he gained selling insurance, to market the boxacise concept. With the help of another former boxer, Derek Herbert, the classes began trading under the name of Boxacise, “Boxing training minus the lumps and bumps.”

Initially, people were slow to respond. The average person may have been skeptical.

Boxing usually conjures up stereotype images of slow talking, slow walking, and less than eloquent individuals with violent dispositions. Duiguid's personable demeanor and articulate teaching style, helped allay these fears. The traditional boxing lexicon of dese, dems and dose, do not form part of the Des Duiguid vocabulary. A slightly flat nose and thickening under the eyebrows are the only visible trademarks of his boxing career. Using a knock on the door approach, Duiguid was able to attract the attention of some of Australia's leading corporate and commercial fitness centers.

Today, Duiguid can be seen regularly at places like Re-creation Health Club, Melbourne's most fashionable fitness center. Here, the older, slightly stooped figure of a 67 year old man, wearing a bright red T-shirt and baggy track pants, seems out of place. His footwear is the sharpest contrast of all. In a world where Reeboks, Air Jordan's, and Asics Gel are the fashion rule, he wears old boxing boots laced up to the calves.

Duiguid walks briskly down to the squash court where his audience eagerly awaits. This 6 p.m. group is not your standard step, low impact, or funk aerobics crowd. Interspersed with a few of the leotard beauties are housewives, 30 something's trying to hold on to youth, overweight business people with ample beer bellies, and 20 something's with equally large attention deficit disorders.

This motley crew are about to engage in the new fitness fad of the 90's, boxacise. For the next hour, they pummel speed balls and punching bags under the watchful eye of this slightly stooped, and round shouldered, 67 year old man. Even though he occasionally messes up the

music, or loses track of time and forgets to blow his whistle at two minute intervals, his every word of instruction is treated with respect. This is the respect he has earned from real fights in the boxing ring. His teaching has a lot of credibility. Here is a humble man who, “has been there done that.”

Owners of commercial fitness centers, always looking for new ways to attract members, have welcomed this new “fitness fad.” After a slow start, enthusiastic boxacisers now pummel speed balls and punching bags in over 100 fitness centers throughout Australia and New Zealand. Boxacise now has more than just a cult following. There are annual competitions to determine champions in the speed ball and free style, creative use of the boxing equipment.

While boxacise participants can punch speed balls and heavy bags with no fear of being hit back, it definitely hasn't been a case of “minus the lumps and bumps” for Des Duiguid. He suffered a stroke in 1992. “It was touch and go for a while” he said. “I remember lying in hospital thinking that I was going to die. I wasn't scared, because it's been a great life, and I've got plenty to be thankful for. But when I thought of my two daughters and how much I love them,” he said with eyes now more than a little misty, “I knew I couldn't throw in the towel just yet.”

Apart from a slight paralysis in the left arm, his recovery was remarkable. Within four weeks of the stroke, Duiguid was back teaching five boxacise classes per day. Doctors attribute Duiguid's recovery to his years of devotion to physical fitness. Brain scans showed no evidence of brain damage from 16 years of boxing.

While his battles with the Australian taxation office are not yet over, the success of boxacise is making it much more of an even contest. At 67 years young, Des Duiguid was, still is, and always will be a contender.

#

Home Alone

As the plane touched down in Melbourne, Australia, I thought about the last two years of my life. There had been many changes.

I was no longer living in the land down under. My career in Physical education had taken me to Washington DC as manager of the World Bank's fitness center. America was now my home, but my heart would always be in Australia. It was my heart that brought me back. I have many dear friends in Australia, but my mother was the main tie. Friends can be replaced, but you only have one mother.

My mother, Margret James, known as Rita, was 83 years old. No one lasts forever. I was determined to spend a lot of time with her during my four week visit. I wanted to take in her thoughts, impressions and philosophies. It was the best decision I ever made.

Over the next four weeks, I spent the aptly cliched "quality time" with Mom, and enjoyed more than a few beers with many friends. Mom's health was still good. She did water aerobics every Monday with a group of her friends, and kept busy with reading and senior citizens' groups. But the effects of old age and arthritis were beginning to show. She would get very

tired. For the first time ever, I saw Mom too exhausted to raise herself from her chair, to greet my three godchildren. The usual shower of hugs and kisses was now just a very tired smile. The youngest, four year old Eden, approached Mom with caution. It was the first time those young eyes saw old age and the effects of time. Eden's older brother and sister, 11 year old twins, Lanie and Drew, were puzzled and respectful, but perhaps a little hurt at this unusual lack of attention. It is a moment frozen in time for me. Old age and youth, the passage and inevitability of time so clearly depicted. One day it would be Lanie, Drew or Eden's turn to be sitting in the rocking chair.

That was only a rare instance though. Mum was still very physically able. We went to places in Melbourne she hadn't been before and shared some great conversations. Taking Mom places was never a burden. Her warmth and good humor would never inspire traditional mother-in-law jokes. Everywhere we went, people we didn't even know, commented on how attractive she looked. They couldn't believe she was 83. Friends I hadn't seen for two years often seemed more eager to see my Mom again than me. The Physical therapist who supervised Mom's water aerobics told me "Rita's an inspiration to everyone with her fitness and positive attitude." One of her friends she did water aerobics with told me that, "Rita's too fit for all us old ducks Mike, she should be in the pool with those young birds."

Mom was always very attractive. Her high cheekbones, clear blue eyes, fair complexion, and slim body, always made her look at least ten years younger. Her smile and friendly nature

belied her hard upbringing as the youngest of nine children in the tough Melbourne industrial suburb of Kensington.

Of course times and places change. Kensington is now a trendy inner Melbourne suburb, but it was fascinating listening to mum talk of the Kensington of her time. The local abattoir, Squizzy Taylor (Melbourne's version of Al Capone), dances in the town hall, her mother always mysteriously coming out to check the mailbox when a young man would escort her home from these dances "and there would be ructions (hell to pay) if it was a yank servicemen." I listened intently and was never bored.

Australians of my mother's era are wonderful people. They have lived through many hardships but nearly always have a laconic sense of humor and a great story telling ability. Each story of past years comes alive with anecdotes and a unique lexicon that will be lost to future generations. Mom could vividly recall the American servicemen who were based in Australia during the war. As a then young, impressionable woman, she thought "they were a fine looking bunch of blokes who didn't mind spending a quid on us. But boy didn't some of our blokes cut up rough when they saw them arm in arm with all the Aussie girls."

Mom, always joked that she did her "patriotic duty" by marrying Charlie, an Australian serviceman. She married Charlie James in 1944. She shared many happy years with Charlie until his death from lung cancer in 1973. They had four sons and so far, four grand children.

Although she would never mention it, I could sense Mom's sadness that I was going back to America indefinitely. On my final day she was very emotional and wanted me to assure her

I'd visit every year. In hindsight, perhaps she was suggesting something my male, right sided brain could not decipher.

My trip back to Australia had been exhausting. Like many people who visit home after a long absence, I had tried to pack too much into my four weeks. I was tired and looking forward to returning to my new home, to celebrate Thanksgiving with my girlfriend.

My best mate Bob, took me to the airport. His 4-year-old daughter Eden, my Godchild, came with us. As I checked my bags in with Qantas airlines a sobbing Eden was also adamant I returned each year to visit her. My Aussie machismo was being very severely tested, as I tried to stay composed. Little was I to know that I would be visiting her a lot sooner than that.

The Qantas steward took my passport and informed me that my U.S. visa had expired. There was absolutely no way I would be allowed back into America. It was my error. I had not renewed my Visa and would have to go to the American embassy to have it extended. I was very disappointed. "Don't worry mate," Bob said. "These things happen for a reason, you weren't meant to be on that plane."

I returned to my Mom's apartment and made plans to go to the Embassy the next day. Mom was surprised, but happy. I would be with her again, if only for a short time. The visa would take four days to process. My visit home was going to be at least a week longer.

The following day, after concluding my business at the US Embassy, I decided to visit the Melbourne Zoo. "Gee I'd like to go to the zoo," Mom said. Unfortunately she had made previous arrangements.

“Never mind” I said. “I’ll take you before I leave, I won’t mind going again.” We said good-bye, not knowing it would be for the last time. I returned at 7 p.m. to find Mom lying on her bedroom floor. She had suffered a massive stroke. My first moments of life were spent cradled in her arms. Mom's final moments of life were spent cradled in mine.

I had my private moments of grief but remained fairly stoic throughout the ordeal. I didn’t cry at the funeral, although I almost did when the priest, my cousin, commented on her “cheeky smile and ability to look at the fun side of life.” My cousin did a masterful job of the eulogy, describing the wonderful years she shared with my late father Charlie, who he described as true Aussie larrikin. The fact that they raised four very Australian sons whose various exploits definitely required a sense of humor, was also duly noted.

Grief can take many forms. It can’t be precision planned in a business diary or on in the logic of common sense. I went through a depression that expressed itself in too much drinking and erratic behavior at work, and in my close relationships. I think I am OK now. I still dream about Mom. My friends who have had parents die say they dreamed about them for years.

Looking back now, two years later, I don’t have any unpleasant memories. I was very lucky to have spent the final weeks of my mother's life with her. I will cherish them for the rest of my days. We shared our life experiences before it was too late. Most people can’t say that.

As the American Indians say “it was a good death.” There was little pain or suffering, and she didn’t die alone. Mom was a very religious person. She didn’t measure herself against

the lives of others, or see herself as better for following her religion. She lived her life, her faith, by example, without preaching.

All the praise and compliments she received from different people was the final installment, the thanks from all, for a job well done. The job was life, and Margaret James, my Mother, did exceedingly well. I was proud to be part of that life, right until the very end.

#

The Great White Shark- Harpooned Again

The term “tall poppy syndrome,” is a colloquial Australian expression used to describe the practice of criticizing anyone who has been successful. It is derived from an old farming practice in Australia, where after planting a row of long stemmed poppy plants, the farmer cuts the heads of those which rise above the rest. The tall poppy has been cut back to size to stay in line with those which have not risen. While the practice of bringing successful people back to the rest of the pack is a world wide phenomenon, in Australia it is often regarded as a national trait.

One of the prime targets for the “tall poppy syndrome” in recent years has been Australian golfer Greg Norman. Norman has been a very successful golfer. At 41 he is golf’s all time leading money winner, having won an astonishing 73 tournaments world wide.

Unfortunately it is his inability to win the major golf tournaments which seem to attract headlines. He has lost playoffs in all four majors (British Open, US Masters, US PGA and European open). He has taken six leads in majors going into the final day and won only one. Perhaps this is the reason many Australians, and especially the media, view him with scorn and

derision. “He can’t win the big ones” and “he’s a bloody lair who chokes when the going gets tough” are common sentiments.

What inspires this type of mean spirited criticism? Jealousy would have to be one reason. Norman is a prime target for the “green eyed monster” or “tall poppy cutter.” He has it all, good looks, charm and wealth that is staggering. He also has a confidence that may be mistaken for arrogance. “You wouldn’t find a better round of golf than what I played today,” is a typical Norman comment.

Norman is very aware of this ill feeling. In a recent Sports Illustrated article Norman expressed his sadness. ‘I get down about it,’ Norman says. I get depressed when I go to Australia and wake up in the morning and get nothing but ridicule. So I don’t care anymore.”

With Norman it appears to be a combination of this lack of success in the big tournaments, and his personal charisma, that raises the ire of the “tall poppy” cutter. The private jets, helicopters, and hobnobbing with movie stars, are too much for those who prefer the safety of staying with the pack. His nickname “the great white shark,” his trademark black hats, blond hair, great physique, it’s all too much to take for the stereotypical pot bellied beer guzzling ocker.

One old saying is, “Aussie males are very balanced people, they have a chip on each shoulder.” Greg Norman has the broad shoulders of a swimmer and the thin waist of a dancer. He has a body and athletic grace which would have seen him successful at many sports. His face is now a little worn from the effects of age and exposure to the sun, but he is still handsome. Greg Norman is a prime candidate for the tall poppy cutters.

Today he is competing in the US Masters golf tournament in Augusta, Georgia. After 36 holes Norman is four strokes ahead of the field. If he holds on to win, Norman will be the first Australian to win the US Masters. For Norman it will end a heart breaking string of near misses. He has been runner up in this tournament twice after leading until the last hole.

The next 36 holes will be crucial for Norman. Will “the Great White Shark” be harpooned like in the 1986 and 1990 Masters, or will he smell blood and devour his prey? The Aussie media and “tall poppy cutters” will be ready to feast on his remains should he fail again.

Play commences at 2:30 p.m. Saturday. After seven holes Norman has had two bogeys, but is still 3 strokes ahead of his nearest rival Nick Faldo. At the ninth hole Norman holds par and Faldo bogeys. “The Shark” is now back to a four stroke lead.

As the event progresses, Norman and Faldo match shot for shot. Norman retains his four stroke lead. At the 15th hole, Norman sinks an uphill 12 foot putt to go 12 under the card and lead by five strokes. To quote the CBS commentator, “Norman is on fire.”

At the 16th hole, Norman hits a thunderous drive 300 yards down the fairway. Faldo shanks his drive to the left and lands his ball amongst the crowd. Norman then hits a perfect approach shot that leaves him six feet from the hole. Faldo recovers and hits a good shot that leaves him just short of the green.

Norman measures his next shot. He looks at it from every angle. There is a swirling wind that can make even simple shots difficult. He stands astride the ball, his huge muscular forearms entwined around the club. It is hard to imagine how such powerful limbs can revert to

an almost dainty fine touch required for these putts. His shoulders don't move. He taps the ball and it sinks in the hole. He is now six strokes ahead of Faldo. Faldo then hits his shot within five feet of the hole, but misses with his next. Over the final two holes, Faldo manages to gain one stroke from Norman. At the end of the third day of the US Masters, Greg Norman is six strokes ahead of his nearest rival Nick Faldo. This is Norman's best chance ever of winning.

The final days play is due to commence at 2:30 p.m. with televised coverage starting at 3:30 p.m. The Sunday sports pages and television sports' shows are full of golf experts analyzing Norman's chances of winning. Something extraordinary must happen for him to lose. No one is betting against him, but a few mention his previous failures as possible omens of disaster.

When the television coverage begins, six holes are completed. Norman's lead has been cut back to four. Faldo appears his only danger as the rest of the field are eight shots and more behind. Norman appears to have lost the confident stride. He now seems to have a stutter step. He looks like a nervous man approaching the wedding altar. He is not sure if he's doing the right thing.

At the seventh hole, Norman just misses an eight foot putt for a birdie and a five shot lead. At the eighth hole, Norman pulls his second shot to the left 10 yards short of the green. Nick Faldo, hits his shot perfectly and is on the green. Norman's next shot is a good one but he is still 10 feet from the hole. Norman must sink his next putt to stay four shots ahead. He misses by four inches. Faldo is now only three shots behind.

At the ninth hole, Norman faces a downhill, eight foot putt to make par. He must sink it to remain two strokes ahead. His putt hits the rim of the hole and misses. Norman now leads by two with nine holes to play. Norman bites his lip and walks away. His face, neck and shoulders are tight with tension. Faldo remains unflappable. He looks like a man on a mission. Nick Faldo is hunting for shark.

Both “the shark” and the hunter par the 10th hole. At the 11th, both men hit huge drives with Norman’s the longest. It appears that Norman still has the edge in unbridled power, but not in the finely tuned motor skills required for putting. Nervousness must be playing a part. Now we will see if Norman has the mental toughness required to go on and win. Faldo hits a superb second shot that lands 10 feet from the hole. Norman’s approach shot is also superb, landing 12 feet uphill from the hole. Faldo’s next putt is brilliant and never looks like missing. Norman seems cool. He goes through his usual ritual of measuring and practicing. His putt misses by a yard. He must land the next uphill putt to stay in front. He misses and the lead is now gone. The media and tall poppy cutters are sharpening their poison pens and “I told you so’s.”

The 13th hole is uneventful with both hitting par. At the 14th hole Norman lands his drive behind trees. He then double bogeys. Faldo hits par. Faldo leads by two strokes with four holes to play. Unbelievable!

At the 15th hole, Norman has a chance to level. Faldo hits his first shot to the left, deep into the shade of palm trees. Unfortunately Norman’s drive is not much better, landing just off the green. Faldo’s next shot lands on the green, but is 20 feet from the hole. Norman pitches his

next shot and it is perfect up until the last 2 inches when it swerves right. The crowd roars and Norman shows his first sign of excessive emotion. He falls over and looks skyward in disappointment. This golf is a cruel, cruel game. It looks all over. Faldo still leads by two but Norman has a slim chance.

At the 16th par 3, it is imperative Norman attack. He has a perfect chance as Faldo has hit his first shot in the sand bunker adjacent to the green. Norman hits the ball with all the power he can muster. A power that means nothing when it lands in the water. It's all over now. The Shark has drowned. He takes a penalty shot and putts the hole for a double bogey five. Faldo hits a perfect shot out of the bunker for an easy putt to par the hole. Faldo now leads by four. How must Norman feel now? He is the Dan Jansen of golf.

The final two holes are uneventful, but there is a macabre need to see how Norman will react when Faldo finally wins. To his absolute credit Greg Norman is a perfect sports person and human being in defeat. He congratulates Faldo warmly and offers no excuses. Why can't professional basketball, hockey players and other sports people be as gracious in defeat?

What is the Australian Press going to say? In the aftermath most newspaper reports are surprisingly very supportive. There are still some negative headlines using hackneyed clichés like, "Norman snatches defeat from the jaws of victory," but most are sympathetic and praise Norman's sportsmanship.

Sports Psychologist, Noel Blundell, writing in "The Australian" newspaper says, "Norman was overwhelmed by his desire to be the first Aussie to win the US masters. His

emotions bubble up and he gets an increase in muscular tension and his coordination breaks down.”

“The Melbourne Age” newspaper’s syndicated columnist, Frank Devine, praises Norman for the way he accepted defeat. Devine says "The inspiring thing about Greg Norman, was that he didn’t cry. A pushy school of opinion at present holds that men should cry, letting it all out in a gush, thereby living longer and being nicer.” Devine claims this is a feminist campaign to “mumise men in the manner of moms who keep their little boys in dresses longer than they should." Devine feels Norman was a true man in defeat, rather than one of “those losers who have been enticed into men’s encounter groups that go into the country for weekends of touching and sobbing.”

“The Age” also sought comments from “the person in the street” by asking some recreational golfers their view on Norman’s performance. All the reported comments appeared positive. One middle aged man said, “I don’t regard him as a failure, I get upset when people say that.” A teenager commented “He’s human what can you say about it. He tried his best.”

Why isn’t the Australian media “sticking the boot "into Greg Norman for his loss? Perhaps the tall poppy cutters are also finally being cut down. Today, many younger Australians from multi cultural families are forming their own more positive opinions. Many people agree with Frank Devine and admire good sportsmanship. The Australian media and general public are starting to realize, that honestly attained success should be lauded, not lambasted.

What ever happens to Greg Norman's golf career, the world will be watching with even greater interest. Norman summed it up best when he was asked by a television reporter "How can you possibly put such a disappointment behind you?" "Watch me," Norman replied. As an expatriate Aussie, and hater of "tall poppy cutters," I know I certainly will.

#

World Championship Boxing

The crowd here at Melbourne's Princess Park is restless. The main event, Azumah Nelson versus Jeff Fenech for the world light-weight championship, is due to start at 2 p.m. It has been raining steadily since the program of preliminary bouts commenced at 11 a.m. Now, one hour before fight time, Australian Spike Cheney is boxing Argentinean Juan Rodriguez in the final preliminary. Cheney is a skillful boxer, but it's like watching a comedian tell old jokes. The crowd can't wait for him to finish. "Put him away Spike," yells one hairy gap toothed individual. "Send him back home to Argentina in a box," yells another tattooed behemoth. A boxing crowd is not a good place to find the new age sensitive male. "Send, that bloody Argentinean, back to the Falklands" gets a few laughs from the politically incorrect crowd. But "Spike him Cheney," gets a mass groan for the budding Grouch Marx guzzling his beer two rows back.

Not all boxing spectators have violent dispositions and racist tendencies. Boxing's primeval brutality and flamboyant showmanship, also attracts the rich and famous. Media magnate Kerry Packer and actor Paul Hogan are here today, along with many authentic examples

of the Aussie Male yobbo. Amongst this yobbo fraternity it is interesting to see how body building has taken the place of tattoos as the symbol of Aussie male machismo. Tattoos haven't disappeared. There are still plenty of snakes on arms, spider web elbows and HATE inscribed knuckles. But these are now accompanied by bulging biceps, melon-shaped deltoids and backs so inflated they make the cartoon covered arms span out like a scarecrow on steroids. Apparently diet and aerobic conditioning are not part of this redneck regalia. Beer bellies still abound, but the sheer size of these pumped up torsos adds an even more intimidating presence to already aggressive, surly demeanors.

In a one-sided fight, Cheney wins by decision. The rain falls heavily. Princess Park, an outdoor football stadium, is not a good venue for boxing, but it is the only place able to accommodate Fenech's huge following. With twenty minutes until the main event, the rich and famous at ringside find shelter under yellow raincoats donated by the sponsor, Fosters lager. The yobbo's don't let a little rain interfere with their copious consumption of the sponsor's brew. Ancient battle scarred ex-pugilists with bent hands, cauliflower ears and pretzel shaped noses, try to calm their nerves by shadow boxing imaginary foes from yesteryear. One hopes the ringing bells of nearby Sydney road trams doesn't initiate flashbacks of hooks jabs and uppercuts for these old timers. We will need more than yellow rain coats to protect us from that shower of punches.

Even with this swaggering posturing and undercurrent of violence, crowds at Australian sports events are some of the best behaved in the world. There are seldom any incidents and

never full scale riots like at European soccer matches. Today there will be even less likelihood of trouble. Ninety-nine percent of the crowd will be supporting the home boy, Jeff Fenech, in his quest to win the world light-weight title from 32 year old Ghanaian, Azumah Nelson.

There is a sudden cacophony as Fenech enters the arena, jogging close behind his trainer Johnny Lewis. Apart from 50 drum banging, flag waving Ghanaians supporting Azumah Nelson, the 35,000 spectators are right behind the local lad. Jeff Fenech, the undefeated three time world champion, fighting today for his fourth world title, is the archetype Aussie hero. The street kid who has made good.

Then the ever smiling Azumah Nelson enters the arena. He is greeted with deafening boos and racist taunts. "Go home tar baby" yells one particularly new age sensitive type. "Kill the spear chucker Jeff," roars another, with a venom enhanced by a rather frightening frothing at the mouth. The beer must be very fresh, or the men with white coats and straight jackets could be on the way. None of this perturbs Azumah Nelson. In contrast to Fenech's solemn expressionless face, Nelson appears relaxed and confident. We are about to witness a classic boxing contest. Nelson, the stylish counter-puncher, versus Fenech, the raging bull who is willing to take three punches to land one. The referee gives the fighters their final instructions. They touch gloves and return their corners.

Suddenly a blood curdling cry of "Kill the Neeeeeeegggro," in a heavy Italian Australian accent, brings laughter from some, but wincing embarrassment for others in the

crowd. Multi-cultural society at its worst perhaps, but strangely, none of this seems to perturb any of the many Aboriginals here to support Fenech.

The bell rings for round one of this scheduled 12-round contest. Both boxers circle each other, flicking left jabs. Fenech looks slow, his movements are staccato. Nelson glides around the ring landing long lefts to Fenech's body. Two minutes into the round and Nelson takes advantage of Fenech's slow start. He connects with a perfect one-two combination. A left jab to the face followed by a right cross to the cheekbone sends Fenech sprawling to the canvas. Fenech is dazed but not seriously hurt. The crowd is dumbfounded. Their hero is human after all. After taking the mandatory eight count, Fenech covers up and manages to survive the round.

Between rounds trainer Lewis remains calm amid the panic in Fenech's corner. Lewis applies smelling salts and whispers words of encouragement to his fallen charge. "Kill the Neeeeeggggro" bellows the Italian Aussie voice again. "Shut up ya wog, he's already showin more courage than the fuckin Italian Army ever did," retorts another bellowing lunatic. This gets the best laugh of the day so far. The fight is not the only contest. The crowd is engaging in its own world championship of sarcasm and cryptic repartee.

Round two commences with Nelson showing that he is clearly the superior boxer. He nullifies Fenech's strength with clever footwork and tremendous hand speed. Any time Fenech launches an attack, Nelson ducks, weaves and then counters with jabs and left hooks to the body. Unless Fenech shakes of his lethargy and forces Nelson to engage in an alley war on the ropes, his dreams of a fourth world title will be shattered.

The crowd seems more subdued now. There are lots of worried looking Fenech supporters. “Jeff’s just warmin up,” comments one beer bellied aficionado in authoritative tones. “He doesn’t start gettin his second wind until about round four.” Somehow, the hairy beer gut hanging below groin level, and protruding crack of posterior peeking out from straining Levi’s, makes most question this bloke's expertise in physical conditioning. “You couldn’t run a bath tubby, what would you bloody know about fitness” chortles one of his drinking mates. Tubby will not have his expertise maligned. He replies with a quintessential Aussie witticism handed down from the first convict settlers. “Aw get fucked” he retorts cleverly.

Nelson is again boxing well in round three. He now adds stinging left jab-hook combinations to his arsenal of weapons landing on Fenech’s battered face. Half way through the round, Fenech appears to gain renewed strength. He bullocks Nelson on to the ropes and pummels his body with vicious double fisted attacks. At the end of the round, Nelson hits Fenech after the bell. Fenech, reliving his street fighting days, retaliates with flailing elbows and knees. The referee separates the fighters and gives each a stern warning. Fenech’s corner appears happy with his strong showing in the last part of round three. Nelson is not worried. Does this man ever stop smiling?

“You wont be smiling for long Mr. Midnight” yells one particularly poetic racist. The comparison between Nelson’s skin and the dark of night hasn’t escaped the more erudite of yobbo fight watchers. The crowd senses Fenech is on the comeback trail to a historic fourth world title.

Fenech rushes Nelson at the beginning of round four. Again most of the action takes place on the ropes and in the corners. This close range fighting is Fenech's forte. Although he has fragile hands and hence no real knockout punch, the cumulative effects of the body blows seem to tire Nelson. Round four ends with the Aussie crowd in full voice.

"You've got him now Jeff, send Midnight express back to Ghana," yells one beer guzzler who has clear Indian origins. "Oy, if Nelson's midnight what are you? the half past ten out of Bombay," bellows a drunken eavesdropper. The Indian laughs heartily with the rest of the crowd. Entry into the clan of the Aussie yobbo requires a thick skin, and an extremely broad and self deprecatory sense of humor.

Round five commences with Fenech again forcing Nelson to the ropes. Fenech's wild two fist attacks are neglecting any form of defense. His hands are down, leaving his face unprotected. This is a cardinal sin in boxing. Nelson, nick named the "professor of boxing" prepares to teach Fenech a lesson. He glides out from the corner and assails Fenech with a right cross to the chin and lightning quick triple left hook to an unprotected jaw. Fenech goes down. This time he is badly hurt.

Fenech rises at the count of eight. Referee Arthur Mercante asks him if he wants to continue. Fenech, his eyes glazed and his face now a bloody mess, says "Yeah no worries." Nelson, sensing victory, wades in, feints a left jab and lands a right hand flush on Fenech's jaw. Fortunately for Fenech, Nelson's gets his hand tangled in the ropes, impeding his follow-up overhead right. As Fenech staggers and loses his footing, trainer Johnny Lewis is on the ring

apron throwing in the towel to surrender. Referee Mercante mercifully stops the slaughter.

Azumah Nelson is the winner and still the world lightweight champion.

Nelson and his followers are jubilant in victory. Fenech supporters, yobbos and the rich and famous alike, are in a trance. The yobbos applaud and congratulate Nelson as he leaves the arena. “Well done mate, you were too good” yells one in dejected tones. The racist comments appear to have been more gamesmanship than vitriolic hatred.

The pride of Australia has been thoroughly and comprehensively beaten. Fortunately, although badly shaken, Fenech is not seriously hurt. He manages to walk out of the ring unassisted. This is his first defeat.

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The Good Oil on Massage

Today's hectic lifestyle often leaves us tired, tense, and to use the buzz-word of the 90's, totally "stressed out." Even when we try our best to exercise regularly and eat the right foods, we still can't seem to get it right. Our backs still ache, our muscles feel tense, there's that stiff neck and those headaches we get. If this sounds familiar, perhaps a regular massage is the answer.

Massage is one of the world's oldest known forms of medicine and physical therapy. Unfortunately in recent times the term "massage parlor" has come into common usage as a pseudonym for an illegal brothel. For some people massage evokes images of a much more intimate physical therapy. This is a pity. Although erotic massage has its place, many people are not aware of the benefits massage can have in helping muscle relaxation, stress reduction and injury rehabilitation.

A skilled masseur will apply various soft tissue manipulations like kneading, petrissage and friction's to help stretch connective tissue and eliminate metabolic waste products. A good massage will also stretch the muscles to help reduce scar tissue which may have formed over time due to poor posture or previous injuries.

SWEDISH MASSAGE

A typical Swedish massage for the back might start with some light stroking with the hands and palms moving slowly along the contours of the muscle tissue. This will be followed by kneading, where the muscles are gently lifted and squeezed. By using the fingers and palms together the masseur will avoid pinching the skin. This could be followed by some petrissage, a similar action to kneading using both hands in a wringing motion.

The masseur might then decide to do some friction's. These small circular movements of the thumbs help break up scar tissue and loosen tight muscles. The friction's will vary in intensity depending on the pain tolerance of the person being massaged. The pain should only be mild and never feel sharp or excruciating.

The session might finish with some light to moderately heavy stroking. If you are totally relaxed at this point, perhaps even asleep, light tapotoment or skin slapping and pounding could be used. This will illicit an excitatory response to help arouse you enough to get off the table and drive home.

The effect relaxation massage has in reducing stress should not be underestimated. The masseur can create a feeling of ambiance and relaxation by massaging in a peaceful, dimly lit area, with soft, soothing music.

While the sequence described above is a typical Swedish style of massage, there are many other types that vary in intensity.

SPORTS MASSAGE

Massage can also play a vital role in the preparation and rehabilitation of sports performers. A typical pre-event massage will be of a more vigorous nature to help warm up the muscles. With this increase in body temperature the muscles and connective tissue will be more pliable and flexible. This helps reduce the chance of injury.

When sports massage is combined with the correct muscle stretching and joint loosening, a noticeable increase occurs in the athlete's flexibility and range of motion. For the Aussie Rules football player, particular attention is paid to stretching the lower back, legs and groin. For racquet sports the shoulders, arms and forearms should be given priority.

Special ice massage techniques can help the injured athlete recover. Ice massaged into the bruised or inflamed area acts as a vasoconstrictor, by constricting the blood vessels and hence blood flow to injured areas. This can help reduce swelling, bleeding and the formation of scar tissue.

CHINESE ACUPRESSURE MASSAGE

Acupressure is based on the Chinese art of acupuncture. Acupressure utilizes moderate and sustained finger pressure to the acupressure points. There have been many theories proposed to explain the physiological basis of acupressure. These theories were developed on religious and philosophical bases which differ markedly from the Western medical system. The concept of meridians divide sections of the body into lines. By stimulating various points specific repeatable responses were found to occur on remote parts of the body. Central to the meridian

system is the concept of life force which regulates internal and external environments. This life force has two components Yin and Yang, which relate to the positive and negative, active-passive, male-female aspects of the universe.

Health is viewed as harmony of the whole, illness as disharmony or balance between the two elements. To restore balance, certain acupuncture points are stimulated to help produce either stimulatory or sedative effects. By applying pressure to specific points in the body during a massage, acupuncture can help aid problems like tension headaches and back pain.

AROMATHERAPY

An aromatherapy massage incorporates the use of various scented oils derived from pure plant extracts. These oils are highly concentrated and are said to possess powerful therapeutic properties to help restore, revive and heal the body.

An experienced aromatherapist uses selected oils to help in the therapeutic treatment of body imbalances. Oils like Geranium are often used in massage to treat a number of imbalances, including menstrual difficulties, emotional anxiety, and diarrhea. These scented oils with their fragrant aroma, make massage a more pleasant experience.

These are just some of the many styles of massage available. But before you have a massage there are a few points that you should consider:

- Your masseur should be reputable and qualified. Many good masseurs work in conjunction with other health professionals at multi-disciplinary medical centers. If you are still unsure, do not hesitate to ask for proof of qualifications. These should be readily seen on the wall in

a framed certificate. There should also be a “code of conduct” certificate on the wall where the massage is conducted. Many states have Massage Standards Associations who can recommend an affiliated masseur.

- To make the massage more effective, let the masseur know if you have had any injuries, especially to the neck or back. Some injuries and joint problems like recent fractures, may not be amenable to massage. Massage is not an advisable treatment if you suffer from a skin condition like dermatitis. If you are not sure about an existing injury or ailment, ask your Doctor if massage is advisable.
- If at any time during the massage you feel uncomfortable in terms of the area being massaged or any resulting pain, particularly referred to the arms or legs, let the masseur know immediately.

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