



Fighting Fit.

—After a convincing conversation on the benefits of manning-up as a form of exercise, Roddy Boulter took himself off to a boxing gym to see how much testosterone he could invoke. He tells us how it all started.

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“How many fight’s have you had so far?” asked a tanned brunette.

“Oh, next Friday’s will be my fourth, I can’t wait!” So whispered a striking flame haired woman through a smile betrayed by a white-hot gaze... erm, fixed on me. It wasn’t a seductive exchange, in the least.

It’s not the kind of conversation one would expect to hear from a bunch of very attractive women propped up against a bar counter. But one night while out with a buddy of mine at one of Cape Town’s nicer bars, that’s exactly what cackle from the group of women next to us was about. My friend, who’d also been eavesdropping on the conversation, interpreted my stupor perfectly.

“Oh, she goes to the same gym as I do. Hell of a fighter that girl...” He said sipping his pint and aiming a twinkly eye in the general direction of the ladies. I realised my buddy had, in the last few months somewhat changed shape. It all made sense now. The bugger was going to a boxing gym... in secret! Hence the sudden knobbly body, glowing cheeks, spring in his step and... Oh, where’s he off to now?

“Hello ladies,” my friend announced himself, with a seductively dangerous grin. Most of them reached for the counter as their knees weakened, and immediately they were all having an iffy-hair-day.

My previously, detrimentally shy friend had suddenly become Mr. Personality—from relying on his Labrador puppy charms, to a Zeus-like persona, complete with mythical mysteries. And that was the reason for his sudden abundance of confidence. It was all because of his membership to a Boxing Gym ; The Armoury, to be precise.

I decided to investigate. Their website, www.armouryboxing.com, is a substantial introduction to boxing as a sport, which in the end seduces you into considering ‘White Collar Boxing’ as a fitness regime. When I say ‘fitness’, I really have to distance it from the conventional notion. Owner Steve Burke an astonishingly youthful fifty-something ex-British army paratrooper, and boxing instructor, spent some time with me to answer questions about boxing. Questions which have intrigued me since the run-up to the famous Ali—Frazier bouts of the seventies. Like, “Why does it take a year or longer to prepare for a fight?” To answer this, Steve took me back to my primary school days and an inevitable confrontation with the schoolyard bully, which lasted all of... maybe a minute. He reminded me of how spent I was in the aftermath, then compared that to the fifteen, three

minute rounds with a minute break in between, the rounds that a boxer has to be prepared for in a fight.

Boxing, he explains, engages your whole primal being—the need to defend yourself is an all-consuming instinct. In the presence of danger to yourself; your senses, including the ones you don't know about, are auto-heightened as natural defense mechanisms like stress and fear kicks in. The body responds by flooding itself with adrenaline. In the crucial moments afterwards, your mind races to assess the threat against your ability, both physically and mentally. You are faced with options—man-up, negotiate... or run. You decide to man-up. Good. You've locked eyes, your body has tensed and assumed a postural readiness—your hands have gone up, instinctively protecting your most vulnerable body parts, your head and throat. Ready to kick butt? Not quite. At this point you'd do well to assess your mental readiness. In this lonely hour, your enemy is anger. Your friend calculated ruthlessness. At Armoury, Steve and his trainers will hone your readiness to the point of premeditation. And I don't mean only for the ring.

Steve, whose 'day-job' is, Head of Strategy Consulting for Financial Services at Price Cooper Waterhouse (PCW) explains: "Applied to everyday battles, the lessons you learn in boxing are invaluable." Pick a fight you have to win—a beer-belly, a health issue, a spurning love interest, the office bitch, a presentation, a bosses attention, etc. Boxing is the original martial art, and all the punches, the moves the strategies to win battles—the discipline, fortitude, patience, calculation, pragmatism, negotiation, the art of deceit and the slight of fist, are all here to be learned. I think we can trust Steve, the PCW management consultant when he lauds boxing as the means of sharpening your life skills.

At Armoury you'll thrive in the camaraderie and blossom in the solitude (if you so wish) of roadwork and skipping. You'll learn to except the frightening reality of a bloody nose; to take a punch to the breadbasket and evade an assault on your precious lunchbox.

Don't expect fancy treadmills, spinning machines or weight-lifting contraptions. Expect to use your own weight to resist the force you can generate. Expect heavy balls to be thrown at you, then throw them back even harder; then dangle weights between your legs, all this for a concrete six-pack.

When you're ready, take to the ring with one of their knowledgeable instructors, where you can punch the bejesus out of your boss, that love

rival or an acquaintance who ventured into the dark side of your loon. Dance, dance and dance again until you float like a butterfly, and punch, punch some more until you hit the “off” switch. And when you’re confident enough, register for fight-night; a glamorous evening which pays homage to the bones of boxing—to legends like Ali, Frazier, Sugar-Ray, Marvelous Marvin, Tyson... oh the list goes on. On fight-night, the punches, the blood and guts, and the conspicuously absent judges are all real. Punches are traded before respectful embraces and finally, there are only winners.

Back in the schoolyard; had my tormentor been allowed to dictate the date and time and so, the terms, I would have been at the mercy of his element of surprise; had I allowed myself to be drawn into the scrap suddenly, I’d have been enraged and my responses would have been akin to a stuffed monkey fixed on the end of a drill, and the outcome would have been very, very different.

In conclusion; go-on, try yourself against someone else. Dare to be yanked from a sleepy, perhaps tree-hugging existence into a cauldron of pain and gain, and explore a side of you you’d never have known otherwise. Remember you can’t lose. You’ll bloody love boxing, believe me.

I’ll leave you now, skipping into the ring of future as I am...

There are more than a few boxing clubs and gyms around Cape Town. The Armoury Boxing Club is located in Buchanan Square, Sir Lowry Rd, Woodstock, Cape Town. Visit armouryboxing.com for detailed information on why you should learn the art of boxing clever.



WRITTEN ON MAY 27, 2014 BY

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