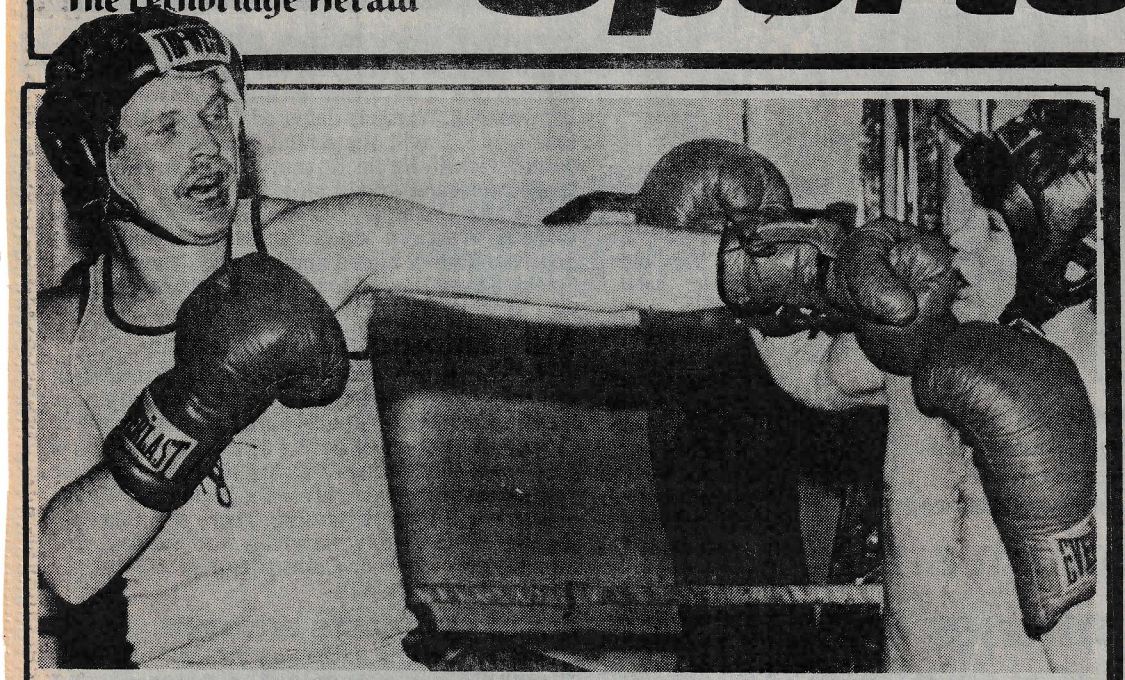
The Lethbridge Herald **Sports**



Herald photo by JOE GAAL

DOUG ROWE LANDS A RARE LONG, LEFT ON RICK DUFF'S CHIN

Rowe readily identifies with losers like Custer

By DOUG ROWE
for The Herald

As I entered the ring to spar with Rick Duff I felt part of history — like Napoleon at Waterloo or Custer at Little Big Horn.

This was my first two-round attempt at jousting with padded gauntlets, and I trained accordingly.

Every morning, I would choke down two raw eggs and then run the front steps of the Lethbridge Community College — all three of them.

When night rolled around, I would watch video tapes of Rocky sequels, knowing if anything would inspire me, they would.

My strategy against, Duff, the Canadian intermediate middleweight champion, was both unique and creative. I was going to use plenty of movement and if he hit too hard I would fall to the canvas and hope the spirit of the Marquis of Queensbury would protect me.

The voice of one of the coaches signalled the beginning of round one. I moved out of my corner.

I started going over everything I had read in my Learn How To Box In 15 Days book. I remember reading, when fighting a southpaw, which Duff is, move to your left away from his power hand.

I did this, but the book was wrong. Duff hit me with a right jab to the midsection and from the force of the impact, I was sure the right was his power hand. So I moved to the right and he hit me in the stomach with a left hand which caused me to taste all those raw eggs I had eaten the past two weeks — the book never said anything about two power hands.

The first round ended much the same as it started, with me running and Duff chasing.

I took the one-minute respite between rounds to think back to the day I had volunteered for this mission, going to my editor with this great story idea. From now on I'll keep story ideas to myself.

The coach sounded the beginning of round two, and finding myself in a dilemma, I decided to revert to my basic instincts.

It seemed to work for a moment, I started to relax and actually landed a couple of jabs and a short right hand. Then I saw it coming — the left hook. I tried to react but it was too late. The next thing I knew I was 19 years old again, listening to the disc jockey at the Park Plaza play Ring My Bell by Anita Ward.

The mirage quickly faded. The three Duffs became one. I knew I was all right.

The round seemed to last an eternity, my breath coming in short wheezing gasps. My arms felt like lead. I envisioned myself as the Gumby toy I had when I was four, whose arms had been bent so much the wires came out.

Finally the end of the round was announced and with a great amount of relief I shook hands with Duff, and removed my gloves. Next time I would do my fighting with a pen.

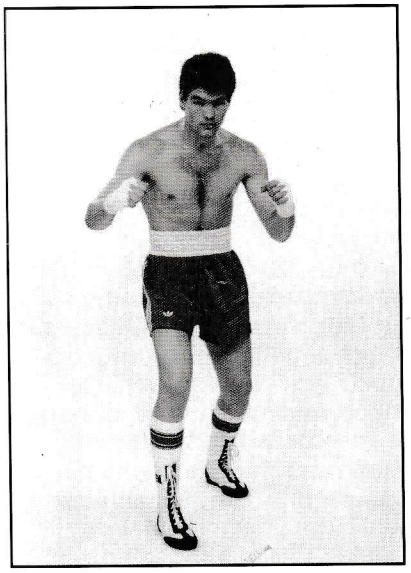
In sparring this two two-minute session, I began to understand the kind of desire and dedication an athlete like Duff has to achieve the standard of excellance he's reached.

Duff, through the Lethbridge Boxing Club, is looking for funding to help him on his way to the Olympics. Heavyweight Willie deWit of Calgary has received similar funding and is now the the world amateur heavyweight champion and Canada's best hope for an Olympic gold medal at this year's Olympics in Los Angeles.

I was lucky Rick took it easy on me.

I pity his next opponent, although I am sure he will not be the same questionable quality I was.

After the match, I decided to retire from boxing. And, unlike Sugar Ray Leonard, I plan to stay retired.



Rick Duff

Boxing Athlete

Rick Duff competed as a boxer from 1979 to 1984, as well as in 1989 and in 1995. He had 251 wins and 13 losses. He was a seven-time Provincial Champion, five-time Canadian National Champion, and won a number of international events. Rick was a member of the greatest Canadian Amateur Boxing Team ever assembled - with Willie de Wit, Lennox Lewis, Shawn O'Sullivan and Dale Walters. They made Canadian history when they defeated the American National Team for the first time. Rick fulfilled a life-long dream for both himself and his boyhood and Olympic Coach Kai Yip, when he competed at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

Rick's aspirations to become a better hockey goalie, coupled with being bullied in the school yard, prompted him to step into the boxing ring at the age of 15. At the Lethbridge Boxing Club, under the direction of Kai Yip, he soon fell in love with the sport of boxing. In 1980, he won a Canadian Junior Championship. The following year, he rose to the Intermediate category (U 19) and won a bronze medal at the Canadian Championships. In 1982 and 1983, he won gold medals at the Canadian Intermediate Championships. In 1984, Rick fought a senior boxer and qualified for the 1984 Summer Olympic Games.

In the ring, Rick demonstrated deceptive speed and threw excellent combinations. "His level of fitness and stamina was crazy." He set a strong example for fellow boxing club members with his work ethic and willingness to help others train. In international competitions, he always portrayed extreme professionalism, sportsmanship, and was known as a rugged, tough competitor.

When his amateur career came to a close, Rick served in the Canadian military. He volunteered as an Assistant Coach with the Lethbridge Boxing Club, Inner City Boxing in Calgary, and the South Side Boxing Club in Edmonton. In 2010, he took over running the Lethbridge Boxing Club and became its Head Coach.

Rick Duff was inducted into the Lethbridge Sports Hall of Fame in 1990. In 2014, he was named Boxing Alberta's Coach of the Year.

'Lethbridge boxer Olympic bound'

With 42 wins and only eight losses, Lethbridge boxer Rick Duff has an excellent chance of making the 1984 Canadian Olympic team, says his coach.

Kai Yip, coach of the Lethbridge Boxing Club, says, "Rick has more potential then any other fighter I have trained."

From the time he started boxing five years ago, Duff, 19, has had to get used to being a winner.

In 1980, Duff won the Canadian Junior Championships in the 132 pound lightweight class, and in 1982 won the Canadian Intermediate Championships in the 156 pound junior-middleweight category.

So far 1983 has been the most productive year for Duff. He won the Canadian Winter Games gold medal in the 156 pound division and again won the Canadian Intermediate championships in the junior-middleweight class.

Because of his Winter games gold medal, Duff also accompanied the Canadian Junior National boxing team on their tour of Scandinavia, where he won all three of his fights.

"I gained a great deal of international experience when I was in Scandinavia. Learning the style of the Europeans, should help me if I make the Olympic team," Duff says.

Since coming back from Scandinavia, Duff has moved up in weight to the 165 pound category, and also stepped up to the senior division.

Last month in Calgary, he won his first fight in the senior division by a first round knockout.

"My goal in life at this time is to concentrate on boxing, to make the Olympic team and maybe eventually turn professional. But I am going to play it smart, I'll know when it is time to stay in and when it is time to quit," Duff says.

After he is finished boxing he would like to study law.

In preparation for the Olympic trials, Duff must keep a rigorous training schedule, causing him to miss many activities other nineteen year-olds partake in. His schedule includes running up to eight miles a day, sparring sessions, and other boxing related exercises.

When asked how his friends react ot his dedication, Duff says, "I do what I feel is right for me. I respect people for what they are and they respect me."

Yip says, "Rick is dedicated and works very hard at boxing. He is a good pupil and soaks up everything I tell him."

Duff says he first started boxing because he was looking for an individual sport. Boxing has improved his confidense and even helped to improve his schooling because it has given him direction.

"What impresses me most about boxing is the sportsmanship. Boxers are your best friends, after you have a fight you shake hands. That is what amateur boxing is all about," he says.

Yip says, "Rick's single biggest asset as a fighter is his speed, his ability to move in and out, to drop in that one big punch. Plus he is a good southpaw, which often gives orthodox fighters problems."

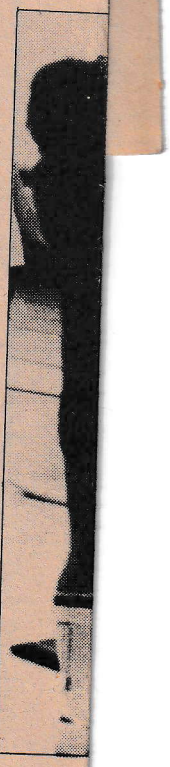
In order to make the Olympic team, Duff will have to beat, Glen Quocksister, the current Senior Canadian Middleweight and B.C. Golden Gloves champion.

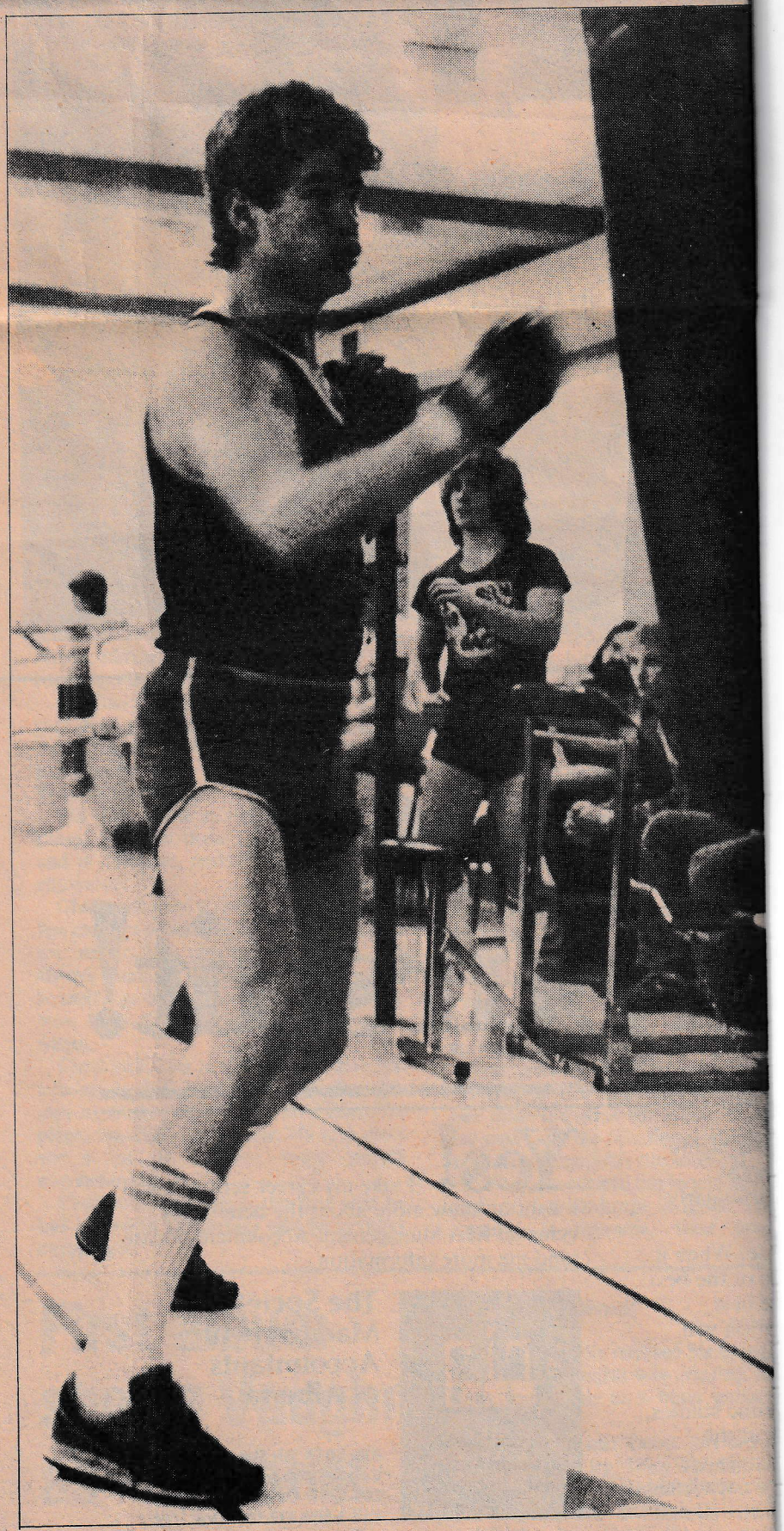
Yip says Duff has the potential to beat Quocksister and will find out if he can in the B.C. Golden Gloves in March or the Canadian National Championships in April.

Duff's favorite professional fighter is World Boxing Association Lightweight Champion, Ray 'Boom Boom' Mancini, because of his heart and his desire.

Former world heavyweight champion Willie deWitt of Calgary is Duff's favorite amateur fighter because, "he is cool and smooth and hits like lightning."

Rob K





Rick Duff warms up on heavy bag before sparring.



RICK DUFF

Duff excited to fight

By DOUG ROWE
for The Herald

For Lethbridge native Rick Duff, the final countdown for the 1984 Olympics is only a week away.

"I'm so excited the days are going very rapidly," said Duff the middleweight representative on the Canadian National boxing team. "I'm kind of getting hyper and scared. But once I'm in the ring it will stop and it will be time to box."

Duff, on a weekend leave of abscence from the training camp of the team in Vancouver, is reserved but confident heading into the Olympics. "This is the first time for me and I really don't know what I'm up against," said Duff. "I'm in the best condition of my whole life. I'm at the peak of my game.

"I'd like to rate myself as one of the top in the world. This is my chance to find out."

The training camp in Vancouver has featured intensive sparring, workouts and fitness tests with Duff coming out on top in all three categories. In the fitness testing, Duff ran a 1,500-metre race in 4:41, the best time on the team.

In sparring, he has been matched against a Finnish National Team middleweight, a man he may face at the Olympics and Darrel Flint — the man he beat to earn a spot on the Canadian team.

"The Finn was trying to land the bombs," said Duff. "He tried to finish me off before the Olympics.

He is strong inside and it was good sparring because now I know what he and the European style is like. If I face him in the Olympics, I don't think I'll have much problem with him. I'll move laterally and pick him off with the jab."

"Rick is peaking right now," said Kai Yip, coach of the Lethbridge Boxing Club and assistant coach of the Olympic boxing team. "His mental attitude is good and coming home for this weekend should put him in the proper perspective. If we get two good draws against the weaker countries then were laughing."

Duff will remain in Vancouver for light workouts until Tuesday, then leave Wednesday for Los Angeles.

"The training in Vancouver was good, it got me used to the heavy humid air I will be facing in Los Angeles," said Duff. "I'm going for the gold. It's been in my thoughts since four years ago."

The Rick Duff Olympic Trust Fund is still $6,000 away from its goal. Anyone wishing to contribute can mail donations either to the Alberta Sports Council or the Bank of B.C., 326 5th St., S.

"I'd like to thank everyone for their support," said Duff. "Now I know people care."

Duff going to U.K. for bouts

By DOUG ROWE
for The Herald

Only three months ago, local middleweight Rick Duff was a rookie on the Canadian Olympic boxing squad.

Now he's a senior member heading a young national team on a tour of Britain.

Duff leaves for Britain Saturday and will have three matches, Oct. 31 in London, Nov. 3 in Cardiff, Wales and Nov. 6 in Glasgow, Scotland. He expects the bouts will be tough.

"They are ranked in the world and that is to my benefit," said Duff of his competition. "When I was in Los Angeles, I saw the English and the Scotish fighters. Most of them are tall and thin, in-and-out fighters.

"I've been sparring with Shayne Peacock and he has a similar style, so that should help."

Missing from the Canadian team will be Olympic silver medalists Shawn O'Sullivan and Willie deWit, who have both turned professional, and bronze-medalist Dale Walters, who is pursuing an acting career.

Their absence will be filled by Duff, heavyweight Lennox Lewis and welterweight Wayne Gordon.



RICK DUFF

"I will have to become a leader now because of my international experience," said Duff. "It will be my job to help encourage the younger guys on this trip."

"I'm still green and have a lot to learn," he added. "I'm looking to gain more experience from this trip and to improve my international ranking."

So far, Duff has had five wins and one loss in international competition.

This tour, the first for a Canadian team, was a major factor in Duff's decision not to retire from boxing.

"After the Olympics I didn't know what I wanted. I needed some time off. But when this trip came up I had to go."

Before and during the Olympics, Duff was under tremendous pressure and it eventually took its toll.

"I was a bit overtrained at the Olympics. When they ended, I was glad it was over because I was so hyped up and the pressure was on for so long.

"It was three straight months of pressure. When it all came to an end, it was a big letdown. I felt both physically and mentally drained. Mostly mentally.

"The hunger is starting to come back now."

After the tour, Duff will continue his boxing career, moving up to the light-heavyweight division.

RICK DUFF WINS BOUT

By DOUG ROWE
of The Herald

Lethbridge's Rick Duff helped make Canadian boxing history Saturday afternoon in Edmonton.

Duff, fighting in the middleweight division, defeated American opponent Arthur Jimmerson by a 3-2 decision to help the Canadian national boxing team defeat the American national team 7-5.



RICK DUFF

It marked the first time Canada had defeated the U.S. in this type of competition.

When Duff entered the ring and it was announced he was from Lethbridge, he became a favorite of the 5,200 fans on hand at the Northlands Agricom.

The fight was a toe-to-toe battle from the opening bell to the end of round three.

"I wanted it," said Duff. "He wasn't hurting me on the inside, and I was stronger, so I stayed inside the whole fight. He was just hitting my arms and my gloves."

In round one Jimmerson came out pounding, but after a couple of shots to the mid-section by Duff, he stopped. When asked if the pounding bothered him, Duff said, "it didn't bother me at all, I just wanted to keep contol of the fight."

Duff gained the decision with his superior work to the body and short right hooks to the head.

If Duff wins the Canadian middleweight title he has a strong chance of making the Canadian Olympic boxing team, said Duff's coach, Kai Yip.

"It was an excellent fight, better than a whole bunch of pros," Yip said. "Rick stayed on him through the whole fight like a bearcat."

Jimmerson's previous two international fights were against the Russian national boxing team, and both were victories.

Olympic hopes rise for Duff

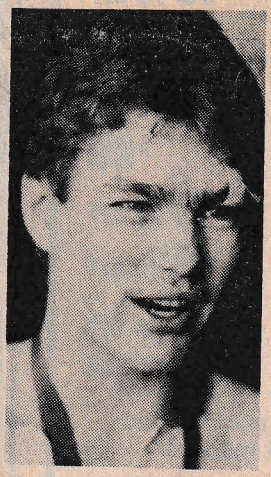
By DOUG ROWE
for The Herald

Lethbridge boxer Rick Duff took one step closer to realizing his dream of making the 1984 Canadian Olympic team Wednesday.

Taylor Gordon, coach of the Canadian National Boxing team named Duff as Canada's middleweight representative in a boxing card against the American National team next weekend in Edmonton.

"Rick was picked because of his great show in the Alberta Golden Gloves," said Kai Yip, coach of the Lethbridge Boxing Club. "He knocked out light-heavyweight Ken Johnson, who was a member of the National 'B' team, and only lost to Danny Lindstrom, the Canadian National light-heavyweight champion by a 3-2 decision."

The middleweight category became open when Glen Quocksister, the 1983 Canadian champion, was knocked out in the B.C. Golden Gloves.



RICK DUFF

"This is a stepping stone on the trail to the Olympics for Rick," said Yip. "I talked to Taylor Gordon and he told me, if Rick fares well against the Americans and wins the Canadian Nationals, he has a good chance of being named to the Olympic team."

The Canadian Olympic committee chooses boxers who have a good chance against international competitors.

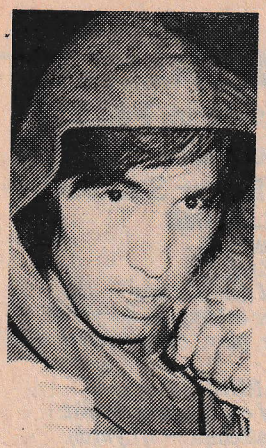
The tournament in Edmonton is being held to raise money for the Canadian Olympic team, and will feature former world champions Willie deWit and Shawn O'Sullivan. The Americans should be bringing a strong team because of the presence of deWitt and O'Sullivan, said Yip.

Duff said even though the American team is ranked third in world, the man he will fight will be just another opponent.

"In the last fight with Lindstrom I gained a lot of experience and now I want to use that against another opponent," said Duff. "I'll be psyched up for this, it gives me something to work towards."

Duff was scheduled to fight Kevin Fitzpatrick, number 10 ranked amateur middleweight in the U.S., in Spokane this weekend.

But, because Duff does not want to risk injury before his upcoming fight in Edmonton, he will fight Fitzpatrick at the opening of the Alberta Winter Games in Crowsnest Pass, Feb. 29-March 4.



DON SHOUTING



RICK DUFF



WES BLACK RABBIT



BAILEY HUEMER

Four thriving clubs

Local boxing year good

By DOUG ROWE
for The Herald

By far, the most successful boxer in Lethbridge this year was middleweight Rick Duff.

Duff, fighting for the Lethbridge Boxing Club, won the Alberta championship, gold medals at the Western Canada Summer Games and Canada Winter Games, the Canadian middleweight championship, a Scandinavian International Tournament, the Idaho North Western middleweight championship and the Alberta Diamond Belt.

Duff's next goal is the Olympic Games.

The past season was also a good one for other members of the Lethbridge Boxing Club.

"1983 has been one of my most successful years as coach of the Lethbridge Boxing Club," says Kai Yip. "Lethbridge has always been very prominent in the Alberta boxing scene. A lot of Canadian champions have come out of here."

Yip had four boxers win Bronze Glove championships — Mark Wrolosky, 139 pounds, Sven Sieber-Borath, 125 pounds, Jason Monroe, 140 pounds and Scott Asplen 115 pounds.

The club also had four other champions.

Rob Kovacs won the Alberta Golden Gloves in the 132-pound category, Curtis Hatch won Alberta provincials, the Idaho North Western Championships, the Golden Gloves and the United Way Tournament in the 100-pound class.

Heavyweight Peter Petrik won a provincial championship as well as the Idaho North Western State championship and the Alberta Diamond Belt.

Light-heavyweight Kevin Moline won provincials and the Alberta Diamond Belt.

Lethbridge Boxing Club hopes to host a fight card in February.

Lethbridge is one of the best boxing centres in Alberta, says another local coach.

"Calgary and Edmonton have two clubs each and Lethbridge has three — I guess you could say this is where the best boxers are coming from." says Nap Black Rabbit, of the Lethbridge Friendship Centre Boxing Club.

Black Rabbit and Joe Spotted Bull head up Lethbridge's newest fistic club. The Friendship Centre Boxing team has been operating since September and though short, 1983 was a good year.

Sonny Bruised Head won the Alberta Bronze Glove Championships in the 95-pound category and also won the United Way Tournament in Edmonton. Herbie Villebrun won the Bronze Gloves and the United Way Tournament in the 90-pound category.

Wes Black Rabbit captured the 125-pound championship, and was named best junior in the United Way Tournament.

The Friendship Centre will host its first card Jan. 7 at the Lethbridge Exhibition Pavilion.

The Logic Boxing Club also had a good year.

"There are a lot of boys in Lethbridge who would like to box," says Joe Huemer, coach of the club. "The fans are also good — we have more people coming out to our cards then a year ago."

Bailey Huemer was the most successful Logic boxer, winning the provincials, Golden Gloves and Diamond Belt. Todd Peterson of the Logic Club won the Bronze Gloves and the Junior Golden Gloves in the 70-pound category and Shawn Helle won the 75-pound provincial title.

Desmond Sullivan won the 100-pound junior Golden Gloves and Mark Peta won the 132-pound Provincial championships. Trevor Germshied won the Bronze Gloves in the 105 pound category and light-heavyweight Shayne Peacock was also a Bronze Gloves champion.

The Logic Club will host the Winter Games box-off, Jan. 14 at the Labor Club.

The Kainai Boxing Club on the Blood Reserve also sports a number of top-calibre boxers with Rod First Rider coaching.

A fairly new club, the Kainai boxers are carrying on a tradition of championship clubs.

Among the talented boxers in the Kainai club are Don Shouting, Murray First Charger, Alvin Bad Man, Wes Heavy Runner, Homer Shot Both Sides and Mickey Day Rider.

'Canada's boxing team strongest ever'

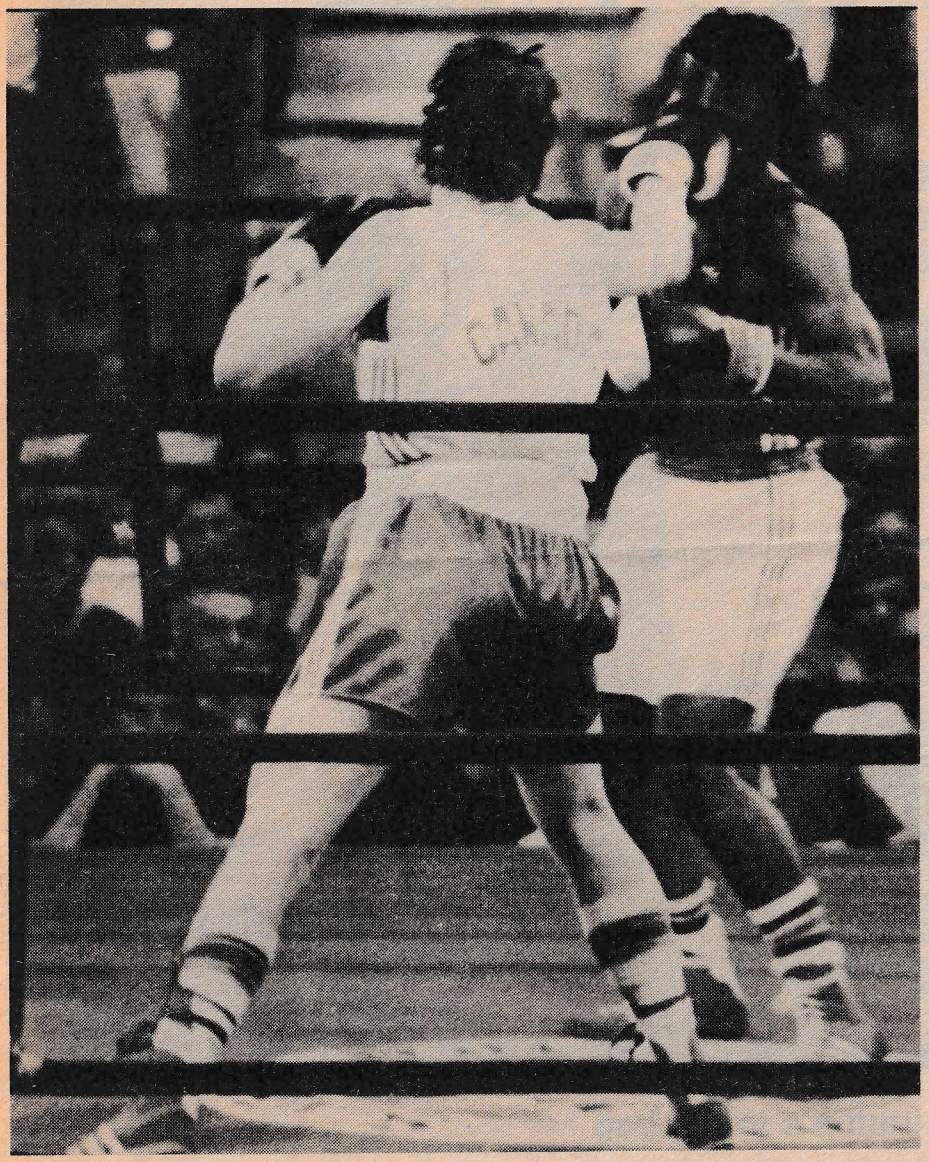


Photo by Doug Rowe

Rick Duff lands a right jab to the face of Arthur Jimmerson.

By Doug Rowe

The 1984 Canadian National Boxing Team has a good chance of winning a number of medals at this year's Olympics in Los Angeles.

This is the strongest boxing team ever put together in Canada says Kai Yip coach of the Lethbridge Boxing Club.

The 5,200 fans on hand at the Edmonton Northlands Agricom, on Feb.25, watched the team perform a feat never before accomplished, as they defeated the U.S. national team 7-5, the first win for Canada against the Americans in a pre-Olympic boxing competition.

Over 2,000 fans had to be turned away at the door.

The first fight, although a loss for Canada set the tone for the rest of the card.

Billy Dunlop, of Calgary, lost a unanimous decision to Paul Banke in the flyweight category. But in losing, Dunlop proved Canadians could compete, as he took all of Banke's best shots in the first two rounds and then came back to win the final round.

The second fight featured world amateur junior-middleweight champion, Shawn O'Sullivan.

O'Sullivan, from Toronto, entered the Agricom to a standing ovation.

In his fight against American Michael Cross, O'Sullivan displayed his well-known power, forcing Cross into two standing eight-counts in the first and second rounds. O'Sullivan finally forced the referee to stop the contest when he dropped Cross with a right hook halfway through round two.

When heavyweight deWit entered the arena for the third fight he was greeted with loud cheers. A number of supporters from deWit's hometown of Grande Prairie started a chant of 'Willie, Willie' which drowned out the announcers voice.

deWit did not disappoint the crowd either as he knocked down Olian Alexander three times in the second round, forcing the referee to stop the contest.

Lethbridge was also well represented at the card as local middleweight Rick Duff won a 3-2 split-decision over Arthur Jimmerson.

Once Duff entered the ring and it was announced he was a native Albertan, he became a crowd favorite.

The fight between Jimmerson and Duff was a grueling match as they stood toe-to-toe for the entire three rounds.

"I wanted it. He couldn't hurt me on the inside," said Duff, "So I stayed inside and he only hit my arms and my gloves."

Duff earned the decision with his superior work in close, as he pounded Jimmerson's body and head with right uppercuts and right hooks.

"The first thing I went after was his midsection," said Duff. "But one thing I can say is he took all my best shots. They didn't even phase him."

deWit's coach, Harry Snatic said with this win and a victory at the upcoming Canadian National Championships, Duff should have a good chance of being named to the Olympic team.

Jimmerson's two previous international bouts were victories against the Russians.

Final flurries.

The biggest upset of the card had Lennox Lewis of Kitchener, winning a split-decision over Craig Payne, the second ranked amateur super heavyweight in the world.

Other Canadian winners included; Dale Walters of Vancouver, unanimous decision over Todd Hickman in the bantamweight category. Hickman is the number two ranked flyweight in the world. Asif Dar, Toronto, split-decision over Robert Byrd, the seventh ranked lightweight in the world. Dennis Lambert, Montreal, referee-stops-contest over Anthony Haskins in the junior-welterweight category.

Before this competition Canada was ranked twelfth and the United States second in amateur boxing.