



OUABC

Alumni Newsletter

Hilary 2024

Welcome to the Hilary 2024 edition

I'm delighted to bring you a bumper edition of the newsletter this term along with confirmation of the date of the 2024 Varsity Match - 6pm, Friday 8th March at the Cambridge Guildhall.

This term we have an update from the Women's Captain, some heartfelt thanks to Dave Mace, who retired as Head Coach at the end of last year, a report on the recent Town V Gown fixture at Iffley Road, a trip back to 1920, and obituaries for two members of our alumni. No Q and A this time, I'm afraid, but plenty else to read.

And if you haven't already booked your Varsity Match tickets, follow this link and enter code OXF24 - hopefully there'll be one or two left -

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/cambridgeuniversityamateurboxingclub1/1150794>

As ever, if there is anything you would like to see featured in future editions of the newsletter, just drop me a line at marklinehan64@yahoo.com

Mark Linehan

The OUABC Committee 2023-2024

President - David Seiferth
Vice President - Camila Seiferth
Secretary - Charlie James
Treasurer - George Garner
Women's Club Captain - Teresa Habib Meriggi
Women's Varsity Captain - Kaya Axelsson
Men's Club Captain - Rory Mitchell
Men's Varsity Captain - Roberto Lacourt

The Committee is supported by the following:

Social Secretaries - Éilish Farrelly and Yang Xu
Welfare Officers - Lara Mallin and Fatima El-Faki
Web-site - Michael Cheng
Alumni officer - Patrick Ryce

WOMEN'S CAPTAIN'S UPDATE

This year's OUABC training camp was an absolute success; we started things off with a bang right after New Year with the new coaching team, Coach Adrian Mocu and his son, Coach Leo. Although the rain, darkness, and quasi-freezing temperatures were slightly more grim than what we experienced during the training camp in Tenerife last year, we got the chance to focus on our training and really push ourselves to our limits with the camp here in Oxford.

The morning running sessions, either back to front sprints with the team on the track or hill sprints on Headington Hill, as my collection results will testify to, made it hard to drag myself to the library. Thank god for the mid-day refuelling with the team at Vincent's Club. Evening sessions were gruelling, with Adrian having us focus on sparring and technical work. I have never felt myself improve in such a short space of time. Adrian's passion for boxing is palpable to anyone who sets foot in the training sessions, with his excitement and fervour for the sport as infectious as the smile on his face. The only thing that can match the level of his positive energy is his technical and tactical knowledge in the ring.

We are incredibly lucky to have both Adrian and Leo with us this term as we gear up for Town vs Gown on the 27th of January (report in this newsletter), and in the lead up to the Varsity Match. This is the year we take Cambridge, on their home turf, March 8th. I have never felt more confident and more proud of the OUABC. Up the Dark Blues!

Teresa Habib Meriggi - Women's Captain

DAVE MACE - OUABC COACH 2004-2023

The announcement in the last newsletter of Dave Mace standing down as Head Coach prompted a number of alumni members to get in touch wanting to express their thanks to Dave and appreciation for all he's done for the club.

Richard Pickering, who was part of the 2009 and 2010 teams told me “Dave was a fierce, loyal, and utterly determined coach. He genuinely cared about his boxers and wanted them to succeed. More often than not this meant pushing people far beyond their comfort zones, something for which in hindsight I'm sure everyone is grateful. I didn't know what it meant to train hard until I trained under Dave. He also was and is a staunch believer in women's boxing. Without his commitment, I doubt women's boxing would have become what it is today at Oxford.”



Dave wearing his Head Coach's blazer, awarded by the Chancellor of the University, Lord Patten, at the opening of the Gallie-Lewis-Dean gym, and with the 2006 team.

Tom Frejie, who boxed at middleweight in 2005 and 2006 sent me this tribute to Dave and his achievements as Head Coach:

“I first met Dave as a terrified, naïve first year in 2003 (actually it was my “second” first year, that's another story). He had joined the club to support the loveable and inspiring Des Brackett, coaching a proper motley crew. What faced them was a group of committed but talentless enthusiastic novice boxers. While Des focused on 15-20 shot combinations that only Des (or Harley, David's son, more of him to come) could hope to pull off in the ring, Dave quickly realised he needed to convey the basics at some pace to the rest of us. The team grew, aided by an outstanding set of genuinely talented boxers from Oxford Brookes who joined us for training and the team achieved an honourable defeat to a strong and experienced Cambridge side - a journey captured in the excellent “Blue Blood”.

In 2004, with the majority of that team leaving, Des and Dave began the first of (many) rebuilds at OUABC. Ultimately, this was to prove painful. A callow squad was hammered by Cambridge 9-0 the

following year. It was an unfortunate season with injuries depriving the team of talented boxers - not to mention some questionable judging away in Cambridge.

However, I think this was the making of Dave Mace - Head Coach of OUABC. Dave quickly realised the imperfections of the system. That he was on an annual treadmill to fill nine places and mould novices into semi-competent amateur boxes from the group that showed up annually at freshers week. He'd say with a wry smile as 200 freshers showed up for the first training session "Just you wait Tom, there'll only be 10 by Christmas" - he was never wrong.

The 2005/06 season was, I believe, where it all started to come together. Des focused on pads and sparring, Dave on the floor and coaching, ably assisted by Jim (bang bang) Frew and Darren. We had an influx of talented first years and a core of returning boxers - we were ready, and a real team for the first time in a while. Dave was instrumental, coaching, cajoling and inspiring. The level of sparring and intensity was nothing I had known before at the club, with the Oxford Brookes guys always raising the level and there was real competition for places. I knew something good was happening when we returned, singing in the bus, from Cardiff with a nice collection of gold BUSA medals. Town vs. Gown was easily navigated (I think a clean sweep for OUABC) and we were ready for Varsity. Des and Dave combined to deliver an inspiring team talk - backed by Dave's fundamentals and Des' flair, we not only "won the weigh-in" but the night.



Dave overseeing "ground work" at Iffley Road, something most of us remember with varying degrees of fondness...

However, there was a further achievement for Dave on that night. Three female bouts preceded the men. This would set in motion the start of women's boxing at Oxford and what a legacy this is for Dave. The OUABC women have gone from strength to strength and Dave was truly instrumental, encouraging, making space and making time. He would often say the girls were more committed than the men, and frankly it was hard to dispute. The accolades and awards followed, probably at one point making OUABC one of the best women's clubs in the country.

Dave took on the role of Head Coach with relish. His connections to the local community and Oxford roots meant the club became a welcoming place for all. Dave (and Des) pushed us (me) to realise there was a world outside the quadrants of ancient colleges with trips to Berinsfield, Abingdon and Blackbird Leys. In later years this would extend to training camps to Tenerife - cheers Dave, I got squaddies in Abingdon, others got the sun and sand in Spain! The fact that this trip took a local boxer, free of charge,

only highlighted further Dave's commitment to making OUABC more than just a university club but an outward looking club that was aware of its privileged and unique status.

Dave's passion and commitment to OUABC are beyond question. He treated us like his children and the club like a family, his family. It quite literally was his extended family, with Harley joining training (by far the most talented boxer in the gym) and it was clear to all that Dave's principles extended to all - he would never (quite literally) ask you to do anything he would not ask his own son to do, a powerful motivator. The fact that Harley and Dave coached together I think totally encapsulated Dave's commitment to the club.

I can only speak personally when I say that the decency, honesty and friendship Dave showed me defined my time at Oxford. I know this to be the case for others. He is hard to win over, but when won there was no coach more committed to you and none with more faith. More than the passing tutors or others, Dave opened up a world and a side to Oxford few associated with the University ever see, certainly one I would not have seen.

I'd go further, and say that Dave transformed the way Oxford University and OUABC were viewed by many in the town - no mean feat! - moving us from being viewed as "blue blood" to an approachable and welcoming club for all. In addition to teaching us the boxing fundamentals, Dave gave us life lessons and experiences I carry with me to this day, I'm truly grateful to Dave and his commitment to our club, his club for 20 years. I don't think there will be another like Dave and I hope Fiona is ready for a more time with him at home and not down at Iffley Road..."

TOWN V GOWN

Late January saw the resumption of the traditional Town V Gown fixture, although in reality most of the bouts were "internal" featuring two OUABC boxers. Nevertheless, the thirteen bouts that took place at Iffley Road gave squad members much needed experience in preparation for the Varsity Match.

The first bout saw two OUABC women box at 67kg, with Kelsey Monteith winning a split-decision over Lara Mallin despite taking two standing counts. This was followed by OUABC's Mathias Fagbemi beating team mate Rory Mitchell at 78kg by a unanimous decision following a classic hooker vs jabber contest, in which Fagbemi forced a standing count early in the second round.

At 64kg, OUABC women's Gabriele Lukoseviciute took a unanimous decision over fellow Oxford boxer Christina Cheng after starting fast and throwing more punches, forcing a standing count in round one. OUABC's women's captain, a southpaw, won her 59kg contest against UCL's Asha Shinde by split decision, boxing smoothly and using her reach to keep her opponent at bay.

Next up was OUABC President, David Seiferth, boxing at 77kg against UCL's Andre Georges Berre, but unfortunately the UCL boxer prevailed by split decision, despite David being a bit busier and putting some good combinations together. Oxford's Gareth Tan then took on another UCL boxer, Oliver Andrews, at 70kg, but again the UCL fighter won - this time by unanimous decision, despite Gareth looking good in bursts.



OUABC President, David Seiferth was unlucky to lose a split decision

Oxford's Samara Quinn made short work of Downend ABC and Bristol ABC's Ava Duis at 60kg, stopping her opponent in the second round after drawing blood from her nose. She was then followed by two OUABC boxers, Theo Anderson and Tom Ancill at 66kg, with the referee stopping the bout in the third round after Anderson forced two standing counts.

Two more OUABC boxers fought next also at 66kg, with Paddy Rice stopping Rodrigo Peralta in the third round with a big right, following a busy start to the bout with lots of hooks being exchanged. Arguably the best bout of the night saw Oxford's Mohammad Medhi beating team mate Joe Bruton by a unanimous decision landing the heavier punches and applying non-stop pressure to force a count in the second round.

The remaining three bouts were all-OUABC affairs with southpaw Henry Gasztowtt getting a unanimous decision over Preysian Tsvetkov at 83kg after forcing a first round standing count, Jack Nebe overcoming Simon David Willfort according to all the judges at 89kg, and finally Henry Field stopping Harry Orwell in the first round after two counts at 93kg.

It would be good to see more bouts against local boxers at future Town V Gown fixtures, but it was great to see a full card put on at such short notice, and valuable competition for so many OUABC boxers.

Thanks, as ever, for Robin Duggan's detailed reporting!

OBITUARIES

Dr Mark Vincent: 27th February 1954 - 4th January 2024

When one reads in a newspaper that someone has ‘died after battling a long illness’ or similar words, it is easy to dismiss them, whereas when one faces an illness oneself or knows of someone who has suffered or is suffering, the words have a stark reality with real and poignant meaning. Such was it with Mark who endured the debilitating progressive effects of multiple sclerosis for which there is no cure. What was remarkable about Mark was his resilience and self-containment in the face of such a terrible affliction. With Keith Bolshaw, who was light-heavy weight in the same 1973 team, I visited him two or three times a year at the Leonard Cheshire home where he spent his later years. Keith and I agreed that we gained far more from our visits than ever Mark did.

In 1973, we knew that Oxford had not beaten Cambridge in Cambridge since the Second World War. We did not know, and still do not, if Oxford had beaten Cambridge there before it either. Alf Gallie and I were unsure of winning any of the heavier weights from middle weight upwards where we knew the Cambridge boxers were experienced and so we were reliant on winning the first four bouts through to light welterweight and then relying on the previous year’s captain, Shane Fane-Hervey, winning at light-middleweight. That would give us the five bouts to win the match but it meant that there was much pressure on the lighter boxers.

We were fortunate that, through their own fault, Cambridge failed to produce a bantamweight so we obtained a win by a walkover. This meant that the first proper bout of the evening in the hostile atmosphere of the Corn Market was at featherweight with Mark boxing as a freshman. Having shown understandable nerves before, given the pressure on him, he boxed magnificently and set us on the road to victory by five bouts to four. Had Mark lost, he and we knew that we would be unlikely to win the match.



Mark Vincent in 2022

Mark attended Clifton where he boxed and then read Medicine at Pembroke and he knew that he was cleverer than many of us. His academic studies took precedence over boxing and he did not box in 1974 but boxed again in 1975. He was a tenacious boxer and able to inflict punishment with both hands. His calmness in the ring was exemplary. His resilience during his illness was an example to us all and there were several occasions when it was thought he would succumb, to pneumonia for example, yet he pulled through.

Having gone down in 1974, I did not meet Mark again until the alumni dinner at Pembroke in 2015, which he attended despite already being severely afflicted, supported by his son, Thomas, and his son-in-law, Danny. Thereafter Keith and I began to visit him. Mark retained and was proud of his OUABC memorabilia and it was wonderful to share memories with him. He was a stalwart supporter of OUABC throughout. He was also justly proud of his family who were always supportive of him and he always showed us their exploits when we visited.

After graduation, Mark trained at the John Radcliffe in Oxford and became a much respected and loved G.P. in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, practising until early retirement. He was rightly proud of the gifts he received from patients upon his retirement which he retained in his room together with his boxing memorabilia from his OUABC days.

He was a wonderful man and set an example to us all.

Peter W Davies, Captain 1973

James Douglas-Hamilton (Lord Selkirk): 31st July 1942 - 28th November 2023

James Douglas-Hamilton, who boxed at lightweight in 1962, passed away in November aged 81. He came from a boxing family, well represented in OUABC history. His uncle boxed at heavyweight in 1935 and 1936, whilst his father, Douglas Douglas-Hamilton (Marquis of Clydesdale) earned three blues from welterweight to light-heavyweight in the 1920s (including 1923 when Eddie Eagan famously won at light-heavy and heavyweight in the same night). The Guardian obituary mentions his boxing ability! <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/dec/17/lord-selkirk-of-douglas-obituary>



Lord James Douglas-Hamilton stopping an opponent in 1961

FRANK DOVE - 1920 OLYMPIAN

A big thank you to David Snelling, who won three blues from 1980 to 1982, for bringing to my attention another article from the Guardian. Frank Dove won his boxing blue, winning at heavyweight in 1920, as part of a successful amateur career that included several regional ABA titles and a national semi-final, culminating in representing GB at heavyweight at the 1920 Olympics in Belgium. You can read the story here <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2024/feb/19/from-war-hero-to-olympic-defeat-the-courageous-journey-of-frank-dove>

BOOK RECOMMENDATION

“The Life and Crimes of Don King”, by Jack Newfield

If you thought you’d heard it all when it comes to Don King, this book will quickly put you right. In equal measures shocking, barely believable and funny, it covers his life, rise to fame and “career” up until 1995 when the book was first published. Mike Tyson, Larry Holmes, James “Buster” Douglas, Muhammad Ali, Tim Witherspoon, Julio Cesar Chavez - they’re all in there - in fact, there’s hardly a boxer whose name isn’t listed in the index, such was Don King’s reach and influence. I read it in a couple of sittings years ago and heartily recommend it.

Available here <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Life-Crimes-Don-King-America/dp/0974020109> although other retailers are available.

This newsletter is for you, the alumni of OUABC. If there are any stories, news or updates on past boxers that you would like to share, please drop me an email at marklinehan64@yahoo.com