



OUABC

Alumni Newsletter

Hilary 2022

Welcome to the Hilary 2022 edition

It's a little late to wish you all a Happy New Year, but I do hope 2022 proves to be a better year for everyone than the last two.

It's great to be able to report on some actual boxing in this edition, with the annual (in normal times) Town v Gown resuming at the Oxford Union in January. With ten bouts taking place, a number of OUABC boxers managed to get some well-needed rounds under their belts.

Fabio Quaradeghini, who boxed from 1992 to 1993, takes centre-stage in this edition as the subject of the now regular Q and A with former OUABC boxers. And there's the story of Jonathan Rendall, a very good and sadly missed friend of mine, who briefly flirted with boxing at Oxford before guiding Colin McMillan to the world featherweight title.

Don't forget the Varsity Match takes place at Oxford Town Hall on 5th March this year, and it's bound to be sell-out. Tickets are available at <https://fixr.co/event/932234315> - please enter the alumni code OXBOX22

Mark Linehan

The OUABC Committee 2021-2022

President: Max Jenkins, Corpus Christi
Vice-President: Jody Bragger, Hertford
Secretary: Joshua Lavorini, Pembroke
Treasurer: Josh Williams, Oriel
Men's Captain: Ryan Fincham, Pembroke
Women's Captain: Annina Lieberherr, Lincoln
Men's Vice-Captain: George Carver, Magdalen
Women's Vice-Captain: Eleanor Kerfoot, Balliol

The Committee is supported by the following:

Social Secretaries: Benjamin Allwright, Queen Mary, University of London and Gabriela Oseguera Serra, Worcester

Welfare Officer: Niall Kelly, Wadham

IT Officer: Jasmin Patel, St Hilda's

Stash Officer: Abhiskek Manikanda, Trinity

OUABC PRESIDENT'S REPORT - FEBRUARY 2022

This term saw OUABC host a successful training camp in Oxford. We gathered 30 boxers - all of whom had had a medical - at 7:30am on the 3rd of January to shock ourselves back into boxing training with our first 7km run. The week consisted of training 2-3 times per day with sparring every evening. We enjoyed three meals a day with each other at the Oxford Spires hotel and finished the week off with a drink at Vinnies.

Town vs Gown followed a couple of weeks later at the Oxford Union. The atmosphere was electric thanks to our MC and Social Secretary Benjamin Allwright and the crowd was filled with MBA students who were there for one person, Jacob Bignell. We had 10 excellent bouts with 5 of those bouts against town boxers. Oxford lost 4-1 to the town after some tough bouts, clearly Jacob's support paid off with him taking home the only win against town boxers. The committee organised an excellent evening and I want to thank all the alumni who made it down to support the club.

We are now looking forward to welcoming everyone to the Oxford Town Hall on the 5th of March for the 114th Varsity match against Cambridge. If Town vs Gown is anything to go by then the atmosphere will be brilliant and we should have some high-quality bouts on show. See above for ticket details.

If alumni members would like to sponsor a bout at the Varsity Match, a suggested £100 donation to the club secures the sponsor's name next to the bout in the match programme. Please get in touch with me if you would like to pursue this opportunity - max.jenkins@ccc.ox.ac.uk

Yours in Dark Blue,

Max

TOWN V GOWN

The first Town v Gown match for three years took place at the Oxford Union on Friday 21st January, giving OUABC boxers the first opportunity to lace on the gloves in anger for some time - including some bouts between club members to ensure as many got to box as possible. For personal reasons I wasn't able to make it along, but my old team mate Robin Duggan took up the challenge and provided a running commentary by WhatsApp through the evening. As another former team mate who was also getting the texts said "it was like having Harry Carpenter in your living room". A big thank you to Robin for ensuring I can bring you a flavour of the evening's events.

Amelia Jeffries OUABC won split decision v Jasmin Patel OUABC

A close bout between two novices.

Felix Rolt OUABC won split decision v Tariq Sinnetambi OUABC

A puncher against a jab and mover, with the latter getting through a tough second round and coming back in the third with a good finish to take the decision.

Hans Chan OUABC won split decision v Dmitri Levetin OUABC

After a good start from Levetin landing the harder punches, Chan came back strongly in the second and finished well to take the decision. Both boxers impressed our roving reporter.

Vintel Romain OUABC (but not eligible for the Varsity Match) won unanimous decision v Joshua Williams OUABC

After a quiet first round, Williams was scored with body punches in the second before Romain began to dominate and took the decision. "Really good fight, those two can box" is real praise from Robin.

Sam Green OUABC won split decision v William McClune OUABC

A cagey defensive fight in which Green showed enough for the decision, although Robin thought it could have gone either way. They would both have to throw more punches to get the decision against Cambridge.

Nelson Ramos Banbury ABC won split decision v Joshua Fozard OUABC

The shorter Ramos came forward strongly, but the taller Fozard picked his punches from a distance and showed a nice left hook. Ramos kept coming in, throwing heavy hooks of his own and began to wear Fozard down to take the decision. More road work and improved fitness would see Fozard through another time. Robin praised both boxers for an excellent bout.

Calum Harvey Blackbird Leys ABC won unanimous v Max Jenkins OUABC

A "cracking fight" involving OUABC's President, Max Jenkins, in which he came up against a strong opponent. Both fought well on the inside and threw big punches and, despite going down and taking a count in the second (a slip in Robin's opinion), Max came on well in the third as his opponent tired but didn't quite have enough for the decision.

David Seiferth OUABC won unanimous v Daniel Hunt OUABC

Both were good technical boxers, tall and punching from range. Seiferth gradually got the upper hand and did enough for the decision.

Jacob Bignell OUABC won unanimous v Harry Clarkson Banbury ABC

The bout started at "a million miles an hour" with a very even first round. In a strong second, Bignell landed lots of right hands and wore his opponent down. Another good third round ensured the OUABC boxer took a deserved decision, and earned an "excellent" from Robin.

Travis Hunter Loughborough University ABC won unanimous v Teddy Andrews OUABC

In the final bout of the evening, OUABC fielded a boxer with a Rugby Blue and two Boxing Blues for Cambridge (for which we forgive him), who was up against a “tasty” opponent. Both boxed tidily, but Hunter forced Andrews to take standing counts in the second and third rounds making the decision inevitable.



Robin's boxer of the night - Jacob Bignell, OUABC



The Oxford Union being put to better use for one evening...

Q&A WITH FABIO QUARADEGHINI

Fabio Quaradegheni boxed at light-middleweight for OUABC during Henry Dean's golden era, winning Blues in 1992 7-2 win and the 1993 8-1. After leaving Oxford, Fabio's love of boxing didn't leave him and took him in a perhaps unexpected direction.

What was your boxing experience before going up to Oxford?

I was lucky enough to know a very good friend of my father who had been in the corner for some excellent pro boxers such as Sumbu Kalambay (a Middleweight world champion who beat some greats like Herol Graham, Iran Barclay, Steve Collins and Mike McCallum) and Vito Antuofermo (another Middleweight World Champion who fought Marvin Hagler to a draw). He explained the basics of boxing to me over several years as a child. Other than that, I was a novice when I came up to Oxford having never competed. The type of novice that thought the Rocky films were a reasonable representation of what happens in the ring.

How did you get involved with OUABC?

Rugby was my sport at school but after very quickly realising the standard in Oxford was well beyond my talents I started looking for something else to pursue. Luckily, the captain of the Blues team at the time was Mike George at my college (Queen's) and he was an excellent role model. Watching him box at the Varsity match in Oxford was enough to convince me to start training along with a small group of other students from Queen's including my friend Charlie Allday who also went on to get a blue in spectacular fashion. Without Mike and Charlie, I am not sure I would have been able to overcome the self-imposed intimidation of showing up at Henry Dean's club.

Do you remember your first bout for OUABC?

Absolutely! It was a tournament at Kent University and I remember it not just because I lost, but the way in which I lost. I remember asking Henry how many fights my opponent had and being a bit puzzled at how he sniffed and mumbled something about it not mattering. Well, good job too since the other chap had over 30 bouts or so and if I had known that I might not have pressed him so hard in the first round and forced a standing count. On the other hand, maybe I would not have rushed out straight after the count flailing around wildly and been stopped. I was also deeply moved by a side anecdote from that day - my late father had found out through a friend at Kent university that I was boxing and without me knowing (I had not even told him I had started boxing) he had driven down from London to see me. I only knew he was there when I saw him ringside after giving my opponent the standing count (oh the rush of blood to the head and heart!). I had not known until that day that my father had been an Italian Army boxing champion during the war. To say that boxing brought me and my father closer would be an accurate statement and that day will never be forgotten.

What did you enjoy most about being part of OUABC?

The camaraderie and esprit de corps of the team. The blues team of the two years I boxed are still a close knit group today and we share a sense of accomplishment and hardship borne together that is the closest I can think of to what brothers-in-arms must experience, without ever actually going to war.

What did you enjoy least about being part of OUABC?

I think my contemporaries will agree that I was not keen on the early morning runs up Headington Hill. Strangely though, looking back, those training sessions now seem inseparable from success in the ring and I wish I knew then what I know now: that confidence in the ring is derived almost exclusively from the time and hardship spent in training.

Which was your toughest bout?

A UHABA finals, probably my third or fourth bout, against a chap who subsequently went pro (it turns out Mickey Duff was at the event to scout him). I don't think I have ever been hit so hard in my life and do not care to ever be hit like that again. I am amazed I stood up to more than one of those vicious left hooks. I dislocated my jaw and could not eat the steak I was served for dinner that night without mashing it to mince. Still, I learned a lot from that, in particular to keep the right hand up.

Who was your most difficult sparring partner?

Henry had a habit of occasionally making light middleweights spar with middleweights and light-heavyweights. That put me up against the likes of Frank Copplestone, Jason Williams and my very good friend Rob Howard. All very tall guys with a good reach. Even if I think I did OK some of the time (if they decided to go easy on me), I always knew I was going to have to work very hard to get inside; the only place safe enough to take a breather! Conversely, I also got to spar lighter boxers like welterweight Rory Duncan. Without question no one put as much heart and determination into training and sparring as Rory and despite the weight gap, I always knew I had to be especially on my toes against him.

Apart from the above, what is your abiding memory of boxing at Oxford?

The trainers. Especially Henry Dean and Percy. Henry became a very influential person in my life and later, as a coach, I modelled much of how I trained people on his principles and especially his laconic one liners.

Did you box at all after you left Oxford?

Funny you should ask that. Just between you and me I did a bit of boxing for the fenland polytechnic during my MBA course there circa 1995. I also went up to Iceland to live for 13 years and during that time I ended up as head coach of the National Olympic Boxing Team and re-founded the Reykjavik Amateur Boxing Club. I then merged it with the Mjólnir MMA club and became head striking coach. The team included top ten UFC fighters such as Gunnar Nelson who regularly sparred with Conor MacGregor. Let's just say that when a country bans boxing for 50 years and then restarts the sport, the phrase "in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king" springs to mind.

What are you doing these days?

I moved back to the UK in 2016, got married to a wonderful woman and now have two young children. Fortunately I run my own Alternative Investment firm (mostly private equity) and have the flexibility to be a hands-on parent especially as Covid has allowed many to realise the benefits of remote working. I don't do much coaching these days although I have trained the odd person here and there for specific events.

If you could give one piece of advice to boxers at OUABC today, what would it be?

Do the morning runs and do them under competitive pressure, in other words, train very hard. The old saying that the easiest part of boxing should be the bout itself really is true.

Who is your favourite boxer of any era?

Leaving aside the skills or the win record (he was not the most skilful nor the most successful boxer ever), no one can know the story of Vinny Pazienza and not be inspired. He won world titles at multiple weights and did much of that after breaking his neck in a car crash where he was not expected to walk again. Vinny was at his height around the time I was at Oxford and I was fortunate to meet him and was impressed by what a modest, composed and thoroughly likeable man he was. The complete opposite to the image of many pros with his record and achievement.

Any other thoughts?

My wife and I recently named our new born son and, after much to-ing and fro-ing with names, we settled on Rory, largely in tribute to Rory Duncan. Rory was one of the most courageous and gentlemanly young men I ever met. A Boxing Blue with such grit and determination to overcome any obstacle and yet possessed of such a kindly nature I do not believe I knew anyone who had an unkind word to say about him. In many ways the epitome of what a gentleman boxer should be and the essence of OUABC. Rory passed away several years ago and is still mourned by his team mates, family and friends. I recommend someone take the time in another OUABC newsletter to recount Rory's story, especially about how he came to Oxford after being held captive in Kuwait during the first Gulf War where he literally broke his back and held his dying brother in his arms before being rescued. From that experience to Oxford Boxing Blue in a ridiculously short time. What a role model...



OXFORD UNIVERSITY

Left to Right:

Back Row: H. Dean (Coach), C. Allday, J. Williams, J. Jackson, R. Howard,
P. Coughlin (Coach), S. McKenzie.
Front Row: F. Quaradeghini, M. Duggan, S. Appavoo, F. Copplestone,
H. Varney, A. Mehta, R. Duncan.



Fabio (front left) with the 1992 OUABC team and (in black) working the corner in Reykjavik in 2012

JONATHAN RENDALL 1964-2013

Jonathan Rendall was a good friend. When I came up to Oxford in 1984, Jon's brief and wholly unsuccessful association with OUABC was already over. He was at Magdalen, in the year above me, and even he would struggle to describe his boxing skills in positive terms. But what Jon lacked in boxing ability, he more than made up for by his knowledge of the boxing world, which saw him guide Colin "Sweet C" McMillan to the world featherweight title - something I imagine is unique amongst Oxford graduates.

Jon was born in Oxford in 1964 and taken into care at 38 days old. His early life was spent in Surrey, before his adoptive family moved to Greece when he was a teenager. He once told me he had been a junior Greek cross-country champion... We had mutual friends at Oxford and, when he found out I boxed, we struck up a friendship. He came to my first Varsity Match in Cambridge in 1985 and I quickly discovered that his apparent joy at me winning my bout had less to do with any affection for me, and more to do with the fact that he had been taking bets with Cambridge undergrads on me winning. Gambling would become a central part of his life.

Jon was a brilliant journalist and writer. I remember him turning up at a press conference for Hector "Macho" Camacho in the 1980s with a copy of Vogue, telling him that if he gave him an exclusive interview, Jon would get him on the cover magazine. Of course, Jon had absolutely no connections with Vogue, but he did get the interview and managed to get Camacho on the cover of the Face - a style magazine that was popular back then. Jon covered boxing for the Times and the Independent on Sunday, as well as having a column on drinking for the Observer, called "The Last Chance Saloon", and much of his journalism can still be found online.

Jon was an acclaimed author - his books include "This Bloody Mary is the Last Thing I Own" (for which he won the Somerset Maugham award, and which mentions OUABC), "Twelve Grand", "Garden Hopping" and the posthumously published "Scream: the Tyson Tapes". He even persuaded Channel Four to give him £12,000 to gamble around the world and film him doing it. You can watch "The Gambler" on All 4.

But my biggest adventure with Jon after Oxford, came when he took Colin McMillan under his wing to manage and advise him. Jon had seen Colin box as a schoolboy and had spotted a fighter of exceptional talent. He somehow persuaded him that he could help him get to the very top of the professional game, while the big promoters were trying to capture his signature. Colin went for it. In the early days I would meet Jon in seedy cafes and pubs around London while he was selling tickets to Colin's fights, and then watch the shows at predominantly East London venues (including the notorious night at the Broadway Theatre in Barking, when Frank Warren was shot).

Gradually Colin moved up the rankings, stopping Gary De Roux to win the British title at the London Arena (treat yourself to that masterclass on YouTube), outpointing Percy Commy for the Commonwealth Title at the Royal Albert Hall (Jon invested in some Gucci loafers for that "posh" occasion) and finally getting a unanimous decision over Maurizio Stecca to win the World Title at the Alexandra Palace. Colin lost his first defence of the title against Ruben Palacio, when he dislocated his shoulder, but what a journey!

Jon was an intense man, but great fun to be around. I remember him persuading me to go to Wapping in the middle of the night, in the days when it wasn't well connected to the rest of London, to watch the 1989 rematch between Sugar Ray Leonard and Thomas Hearns. He knew someone who could screen the fight for us in Rupert Murdoch's News International building, so I sat in someone's office in the early hours with Jon and Colin's trainer, Howard Rainey, watching the bout, each of us scoring it round by

round under strict instructions from Jon that no round should be scored a draw. Once it was over, we had to walk back to central London as there were no cabs in that part of the city in the early hours. No Uber in 1989...

Jon sadly passed away in 2013, having become a bit of a recluse. He was only 48 years old, but he had packed so much more into those years than many of us could dream of, and he is missed by everyone who had the privilege of spending any time with him. If you want to know more about Jon, you could do a lot worse than delving into one of his books, he truly was a gem.



Jonathan Rendall

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