

The Uncrowned Champion

Todd Narson

LAS VEGAS, Nevada -- Imagine being in the middle of a boxing ring the night that Mike Tyson made his comeback fight. Saturday, Aug. 19, 1994, my wife and I were in Las Vegas in the center of all the controversy and action. Lamar "Cochise" Murphy, a 22-year-old professional boxer from Miami fought for the WBC world lightweight title in a bout against Miguel Angel Gonzalez on the Tyson-McNeeley card.

Lamar has been a patient and friend of ours for some time now. He was introduced to us through our attorney friend and patient, Saul Cimbler, who represents athletes and specialized in sports law. Lamar came to us for low back and wrist pain brought on after intense training and sparring sessions. After examining Lamar, my brother, Corey Narson, DC, and I treated him; he responded well.

Lamar's manager/trainer, Benny Collins, expressed his concern of keeping his fighter from being re-injuring during the intense training sessions for an upcoming fight, and we were invited to observe one of Lamar's training sessions. The facility was blistering hot, and the level of Lamar's training was extreme. We suggested altering certain aspects of his workout, and working with his trainer, I implemented a pre-workout warm-up routine and flexibility program.

We continued our chiropractic treatment of the young fighter, many times making "house calls" in the evening after hours. In May of 1995, we were invited to Lamar's next fight to adjust and stretch the fighter before the bout. The fight was broadcast on Showtime and promoted by Don King. Murphy fought Steve Larrimore in a 10-round bout and won a unanimous decision.

After the decision, I examined and treated Murphy. Afterwards I spoke with the team trainers and boxing manager on how to enhance the fighter's skills with additions to his training routine, and how we could increase his speed, power and endurance by adding some simple training methods. They signed me to a contract, stipulating that I would not work with any other boxer. Two weeks later we receive word that Murphy would get a shot at the WCF lightweight world title on the Tyson-McNeeley card.

We had been working for a month with team Murphy when they decided to move from Miami to a more professional training facility in Martinsville, Virginia. We kept in contact by speaking frequently over the phone about Lamar's progress. We soon got a call from manager/trainer Benny Collins. Lamar's lower back symptoms had returned and had effectively stopped his training. I was soon packing my bags and flying to Virginia with my portable table in hand.

It took only two adjustments and four therapy and stretching sessions within that first 24 hours to get him back on his training schedule. I continued to take care of him throughout the weekend. By the time I left Lamar was back on track and training at full force.

My brother and I began making preparation for the big fight in Vegas. Corey and I were to fly out with team Murphy as team physicians, and Benny Collins asked me to work as one of the corner men during the bout. Arriving a week prior to the fight the next 10 days were nonstop activity:

training sessions, team meetings, and press conferences.

The hype in Vegas for the Tyson comeback was incredible. The days flew by; soon it was time for the official weigh-in. After the weigh-in the fighters had to choose their gloves from a table of eight ounce gloves. After the gloves were inspected, tried on and approved by the fighters and managers, the gloves were secured and stored with the Nevada State Boxing Commission. I stayed and represented the team at a meeting where representatives from the World Boxing Council and the Nevada Boxing Commission outlined the laws and rules that were to govern the fight.

On the day of the big fight, Lamar was adjusted and stretched. He was in a zone of concentration that you couldn't break with a sledge hammer. A security van picked us up and brought the team to the MGM Grand Garden. Being the team doctor, I was the one with everything to carry: portable table and a big ACA Sports Council bag attached to my little luggage cart with four bungee cords. I set up everything in the dressing room. It was now warm-up time and pre-fight preparations began. We received word that Miguel Diaz, a famous "cut-man" with over 30 years of experience as a cornerman, was available for the fight. I spoke with Bennie Collins and suggested that he use Miguel Diaz. I thought it best to give up my position in the corner to a man with the knowledge and know-how.

Watching Miguel Diaz work on Lamar was a real treat. He first prepared the fighter's face, torso and shoulders, and then the gauze and tape used to wrap the hands. A representative from each camp watched and inspected the taping of the hands with a boxing commissioner present. Each of the fighter's taped hands were then initialed to assure that the hands would not be rewrapped or the taping altered. The gloves chosen the day before were now put on, tied, and secured with a piece of tape. We were ready to go.

Carl King and some of his associates met us, and along with the Showtime cameras and security guards we proceeded through the back stage area to the arena. The enormity of the situation hit me as we climbed into the ring. This was one of the biggest fight cards in boxing history, and here we were in front of tens of millions of television viewers around the world. The champion, Miguel Angel Gonzalez, and his team entered the ring and were announced. Then it was time for Lamar Cochise Murphy to go to work.

Lamar, a true champion, fought a clean fight, pounding Miguel Angel Gonzalez round after round. Gonzalez fought a dirty fight, hitting below the belt over 70 times, holding Lamar's head and punching after the bell. Everyone from the ESPN commentators to Sugar Ray Leonard (commentating for the pay-per-view audience) declared Murphy the winner. We climbed into the ring to await the announcement of Lamar's victory, and the first loss for Gonzalez. I was holding onto Lamar congratulating him. But as the scores were announced, I realized that the dirty, ugly corrupted politics of boxing had undermined Lamar's victory and his world title. They announced that Miguel Angel Gonzalez had retained his title by a majority decision. The crowd went nuts, and a brawl broke out between both sides in the ring.

Gonzalez approached Lamar after the post-fight press conference and in broken English whispered in his ear, "You won that fight."

After the post-fight interviews, I attended to Lamar, cleaning up a minor cut above one eye, closing it with make-shift butterfly bandages, and placing an ice pack over the mildly swollen eyebrow.

It has been an honor and a privilege to work with such a great athlete at such an elite level. Working with the world of professional boxing has been interesting, frustrating, stressful and exciting. We worked with all aspects of Lamar's training: nutrition, strength training and

performance enhancement. In retrospect, the role of team physician is very clear: take care of every little strain, sprain, subluxation and handle them immediately to keep the fighter moving forward.

The knowledge gained from the CCSP and sports diplomate courses, and the experience of working with many athletes over the past several years, was fundamental and crucial knowledge in devising specific training techniques for developing and enhancing the specific skills of our fighter.

In the world of professional boxing, everyone wants to have an edge. Other fighters in the various training camps wondered who I was and why team Murphy had its own doctors. Sports chiropractic was definitely our edge. Making sure the body works to its optimum potential is chiropractic's edge over the competition.

Corey and I would like to give special thanks to Saul Cimbler, Esq.; cornermen Ollie Dunlap, Miguel Diaz, Piso Sosa; and of course the uncrowned champion, Lamar Cochise Murphy. Keep an eye out for team Cochise: Murphy will be back and chiropractic will be in the corner.

Postscript: All the major boxing publications have declared our fighter the winner, and a couple of the magazines have demanded a re-match. Miguel Gonzalez has however moved up in weight class and vacated the WBC lightweight title.

Todd Narson, DC, CCSP
Miami Beach, Florida

JANUARY 1996