

January 20, 2014

The Mouthpiece

Greg Robinson-Crusoe – Last Man Standing

By: George H. Hanson Jr., Esq.

(The Mouthpiece - June 15, 2013) *With the shuttering of The Legendary Blue Horizon in June 2010—Peltz Boxing Promotions moving most of its shows to Atlantic City and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania—Joey Eye and David Feldman using Harrah’s in Chester, Pennsylvania as their base— in 2013 there will be more boxing shows in Macau, China than the City of Brotherly Love! Greg Robinson, head of Power Productions Inc., can now be given the moniker “Robinson-Crusoe” as it appears that he is the sole promoter in the city.*



Greg Robinson (Photo: Darryl Cobb Jr.)

It is only fitting that Robinson, who is not only the last of the Philadelphia-based promoters, but also the sole African-American, will be hosting a show for the first time during Black History Month on February 7th at the Pennsylvania National Guard Armory on Southampton Road. It will be his 51st event since he cut the ribbon and opened the doors of Power Productions Inc. back in 1999 to provide young pugilists the opportunity to live their dreams. Joining the affable, gregarious promoter will be the self-proclaimed Jack Johnson of ring announcers, Henry “Discombobulating” Jones, who for 25 years has been the premier African-American in his field. United States Congressman Robert Brady will be the guest announcer for the main event.

Headlining the show will be debuting 17-year-old Philadelphia amateur sensation Milton Santiago Jr. According to Robinson, it will be the first time in recent history that the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission is going to allow a boxer under the age of 18 to join the professional ranks. There are always exceptions to most rules and Santiago’s impressive amateur dossier of 183 wins – 14 losses was the compelling argument. Also on the card is arguably the most talented prospect and “baddest” little man in the city since WBA bantamweight champion Joltin’ Jeff Chandler ruled supreme—junior-featherweight Emmanuel Folly (3 wins – 0 losses – 0 draws – 2 kos).

Maybe it was fate, but on September 15, 1978 a 15-year-old Robinson, his eyes glued to the television set, watched in astonishment as his uncle—trainer Slim Jim Robinson— guided his charge Mike “The Jewish Bomber” Rossman to victory and the title over WBA light-heavyweight champion Victor Galindez by a thirteenth round technical knockout. The memorable fight was on the undercard of Muhammad Ali regaining the WBA and WBC heavyweight titles from Leon Spinks during their rematch in the New Orleans Superdome.

Robinson had no idea that his uncle—a former professional boxer who retired in 1967 after losing to future light-heavyweight champion Bob Foster—was a boxing trainer. The elder Robinson, despite a severe weight disadvantage, had also served as a sparring partner for heavyweight champion Sonny Liston. The teenager joined Slim at the Passyunk Boxing Gym in South Philadelphia the following week and hasn't looked back.

Robinson is a life-long resident of the City of Brotherly Love. Born and raised in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, the youngest of his five siblings—three brothers and two sisters. In addition to the sweet science his athletic prowess extended to the gridiron and the baseball diamond. A 1981 graduate of Germantown High School he was a two-sport varsity player—cornerback on the football team and he struck out batters as a pitcher on the baseball team. The young boxer was also following in the footsteps of Lester Hayes and J.R. Richard who represented the NFL and Major League baseball, respectively.

Married with three sons—two of whom are college graduates and the youngest an eighth-grader—Robinson attributes much of his success to his wife Marcine and long-time friend Moz Gonzalez. He isn't hesitant to elaborate that Marcine is the heart and soul of his promotional company. “She handles so much especially on the day of each show, cutting off many problems before they ever reach me,” he stated. Gonzalez has been instrumental since the inaugural show back in 1999 going “over and beyond to get things done” according to the promoter. Without these two, he is confident that Power Productions wouldn't be in its fifteenth year—less than a month away from the 51st show.

In the age of network deals and pay-per-view the debate rages as to the definition of the traditional promoter and what many of us define as a producer—purveyor of pugilism with limited risk due to television contracts and sponsorship. Like most of his predecessors, Robinson is a promoter—his profitability is contingent on ticket sales or filling each seat at the venue with a paying fan. Never at a loss for words and brutally honest, Robinson quipped, “I don't have television dollars, everything is from the ground up—my success or work comes from the muscle using my street team to promote and sell tickets.”

Under the tutelage and guidance of his uncle, Robinson competed as an amateur and joined the punch-for-pay ranks as a 20-year-old welterweight on a Don King promoted card on July 17, 1983 in Las Vegas. He won his debut and would compete in five more bouts before an eye injury stalled and finally ended his career in 1991. Boxing was in his blood and he concentrated his efforts on training fighters, eventually making the natural transition to promote boxing and assist young boxers in achieving their dreams. No surprise that for three consecutive years 2002-2004 he was recognized as *Promoter of the Year* at the annual *Salute to Philadelphia Boxers Awards* banquet.

Robinson's favorite boxer was 1976 Olympic Gold Medalist and five-division champion Sugar Ray Leonard who mesmerized audiences with his ring exploits and charisma. However, it was heavyweight champion “Terrible” Tim Witherspoon, one of the six world champions to be trained by Slim Jim Robinson, who became his friend and mentor. “I idolized Tim. I watched him come from nothing to something and learned the fight game from his experiences in and out

of the ring for almost 20 years,” stated Robinson. The two remained close and Tim Witherspoon Jr. is a mainstay on Power Productions’ cards.

Over the years Power Productions has provided some of the best matchups between Philadelphia boxers that further solidify the city’s reputation as the greatest fight town in the world. “If you are true to the game, the game will be true to you” is Robinson’s mantra. With six shows planned for 2014 the promoter is steadfast in his belief that there will be a break-through and his promotional company will garner the accoutrements that are afforded the major players in the industry—a television contract and an enviable roster of accomplished fighters.

Slim Jim Robinson passed on November 5, 2004 at the age of 74. Fortunately he had the opportunity to witness his nephew’s proficiency as a promoter for five years. Robinson’s voice broke, filled with emotions as he stated, “Slim is my inspiration. I am only continuing his legacy by pushing forward with Power Productions.” He further added, “I am going to live and die with boxing.”

Continue to support the sweet science, and remember, always carry your mouthpiece!

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