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## Four Kings - Leonard, Hagler, Hearns, Duran and The Last Great Era of Boxing

Contributed by  
Thursday, 22 January 2009

With the retirement of Muhammad Ali and the fragmentation and emergence of more titles in the early 1980s the sport of boxing looked in trouble, if not terminal decline. Four boxers came to its rescue and between 1980 and 1989 the four of them engaged in nine contests that grabbed the world's attention and thrilled sports fans. Those boxers were Sugar Ray Leonard, 'Marvellous' Marvin Hagler, Thomas 'The Hit Man' Hearns and Roberto 'Hands of Stone' Duran. This book looks at that quartets rivalry and uncovers the fact behind the myth.

The award-winning journalist and author is George Kimball who had the good fortune of covering all of the boxers careers and particularly their contests with each other as a reporter for the 'Boston Herald.' Kimball's reporting career covers over forty years and it is clear from his writing that he has seen it all. He brings experience, enthusiasm, knowledge and more importantly first-hand accounts of what went on in the ring as well as out.

Kimball sets the scene well observing that the early 80s saw the Olympic games of 1980 and 1984 being widely boycotted. On top of this, baseball and American football two of the most popular sports in the States were plagued with strike action. So there was, he points out, a void to be filled. Fortunately all of this trouble and unrest in the sports world coincided with the era of the 'Four Kings.'

The rivals all had different personalities that made excellent copy for the boxing reporters. You had the snarling wild man from Panama Robert Duran, the shaven skulled and goateed menacing Hagler, the Golden boy and media darling Sugar Ray Leonard and finally the witty, gangly knockout specialist Hearns. The author had access to all of them and the reader is treated to plenty of stories about the training methods employed, the training camps, the thoughts of the boxers, their hopes and fears and what drove them.

He also delves into the World of promoters, managers, trainers, boxing commissions, judges and referees. No stone is left unturned. We have a unique and deeper insight into the world of boxing thanks to Kimball's fist-hand experience that he shares so eloquently with us here.

All the politics between the governing bodies, the rivalry of the TV networks and the manoeuvring of the promoters with all of the shenanigans involved makes for just as amusing and absorbing reading as the fights themselves.

But this is of course a book about four amazing all time great boxers who met in a series of thrilling contests and this book is the definitive account of it. Each fight is covered in extensive painstaking detail; there are plenty of views and other stories shared from other journalists, interviews with the boxers themselves at the time and more recently. Kimball interviews the trainers and strategists Angelo Dundee, Emmanuel Steward, Ray Arcel and the Petronelli brothers giving us a unique insight and unprecedented access into the minds of the boxers and the tactics and thoughts that went into each fight. That it is also an insightful, revealing, thrilling book full of humour makes it all the more enjoyable. This is simply an excellent and definitive book on a fascinating subject, a must read for all serious boxing fans.