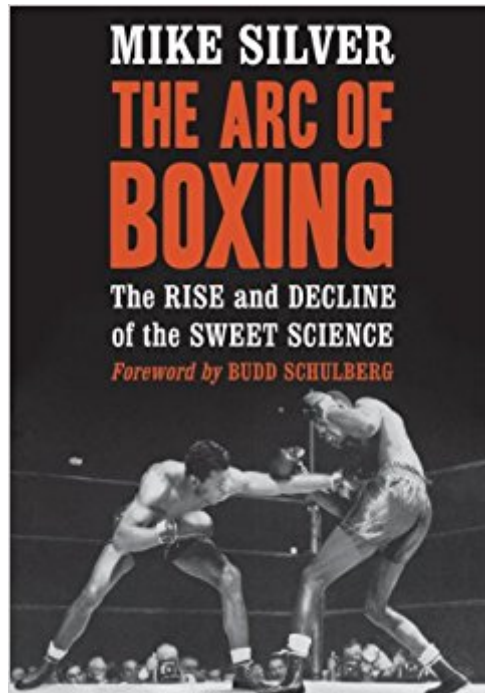




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# The Arc Of Boxing: The Rise And Decline Of The Sweet Science



## Synopsis

Are today's boxers better than their predecessors, or is modern boxing a shadow of its former self? Boxing historians discuss the socioeconomic and demographic changes that have affected the quality, prominence and popularity of the sport over the past century. Among the interviewees are world-renowned scholars, some of the sport's premier trainers, and former amateur and professional world champions. Chapters cover such topics as the ongoing deterioration of boxers' skills, their endurance, the decline in the number of fights and the psychological readiness of championship-caliber boxers. The strengths and weaknesses of today's superstars are analyzed and compared to those of such past greats as Joe Louis, Sugar Ray Robinson, Jack Dempsey and Jake LaMotta.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: McFarland; Reprint edition (April 30, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0786493879

ISBN-13: 978-0786493876

Product Dimensions: 10 x 7.2 x 0.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 32 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #646,663 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #249 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Individual Sports > Boxing #1064 in Books > Sports & Outdoors > Miscellaneous > History of Sports #77619 in Books > History

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"Compelling...entertaining treasure trove of boxing insider knowledge." --newsblaze.com "Is a must...meticulous research."--Boxing Digest"Compelling arguments...unmistakable knowledge and passion." --The Ring [R]ecommended as a valuable source to give historians a raft of interesting insights on [the] sport." Journal of Sport History"If you care about boxing--it's future, it's past or both--then you have to read this book...thoroughly researched...articulately argued."

--Newsday.com"I loved everything about this book...should be required reading...very interesting...highly recommend it." --Cyber Boxing Zone"Lively...Silver explored the magic, studied

the history." --Philadelphia Daily News"Lots of people may know boxing, but not many understand it: its spirit, its cultural significance, its storied past and its probable future. Mike Silver is one of the few, which is why anything he writes about it is essential reading for the true fan of the sport."

--David Margolick, author of *Beyond Glory: Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling, and a World on the Brink*"Mike Silver is the go-to guy when boxing historians need information. In his eye-opening book, he argues strongly that boxing ain't what it used to be. Argue back if you want, but not before considering his opinions and the facts. This is a must-read for all fight fans, especially the young ones who think the sport started with Mike Tyson." --Steve Farhood, boxing analyst for Showtime and former editor-in-chief of *The Ring* magazine.

Mike Silver is a former boxing promoter and inspector with the New York State Athletic Commission whose many articles on boxing have appeared in the

Anyone who has been around old fight fans have heard it ad nauseam -- "These younger fighters couldn't have hung with the guys from my hey-day!" Well, the nice thing about this book is that it actually fleshes out that argument and makes it more compelling than the rantings of an embittered old fan. As someone who came into this read extremely skeptical (I'm 32), I have to say I might actually be convinced. The core four arguments that got me thinking were --1) Simply put, less athletes are taking up boxing. As he points out, at one point in the 40s or 50s, NY state had thousands of licensed boxers on the books -- by the mid-2000s, it was around 50. A sport is only as strong as the athletes that compete in it... and boxing has been on the decline for quite awhile. Top athletes that might have once considered boxing are now playing in the NFL, NBA, and other big money sports rather than the sport of boxing. Now, only a very small percentage of fighters are truly the elite athletes of today. The ranks of boxing were much deeper with talent -- not because people back then were any more special, but because far more people were participating in the sport.2) The frequency of the old-school boxing schedule. I think the authors says that in the "golden era", fighters tended to have a bout every month or more whereas the fighters of today at the elite level do it twice a year at most -- and I am a believer that the more you do something, the better you get at it. The book puts forth the idea that fighters learn better defense as a bad beating or injury will put you out of work for too long and are exposed to a greater variety of styles simply through the sheer number of fights and the depth of each weight division (and there were only 8 then).3) Weight divisions render the "bigger, stronger" element that you see in other sports a non-factor. At least with weight classes under the Heavyweight Division. 160 pounds is 160 pounds... and while I'm a

believer in evolution, I think it takes a little bit longer than a few decades to kick in, so there's nothing intrinsically superior about the modern human being versus the one from the 1950s as long as size is equal. However, they also make the point that boxing has always had plenty of "giants" -- he lists quite a few boxers from the golden age's HW division that were 6'5" or even more. Guys who were beaten by the likes of Joe Louis or Archie Moore.<sup>4</sup>) The book actually has top boxing trainers -- like Emmanuel Steward, Angelo Dundee, Freddie Roach, and Teddy Atlas -- breaking down modern fighters and fights, critiquing the boxing technique used and offering alternatives that worked for past fighters, all explained by some of the top boxing coaches of all time. Defense is the top thing criticized, which makes sense when you factor in the points above. But, on the negative side... The one thing you usually have to give the athletes of today is the superior science they have on their side, from training equipment, nutrition, supplements, etc. I feel the book makes a weak case as far as saying modern strength-training creates muscle-bound fighters, picking out fighters who used weight-training and have lost. This is a bit of a straw man argument -- you could point to a ton of fighters who use a speed-bag and have lost. Also, the critics of this book are right -- the book needed a good edit as by the last few chapters, you start to hear the same thing over and over from certain experts -- "But could so-and-so compete with golden age fighter-x? No way, he would get KO'ed in the third round and be nothing more than a club fighter." Even if true, how many times do we need to hear it over and over? And since it's pure speculation, even from an expert (and let's face it -- take a look at past predictions from sports experts and you're not seeing an extraordinary level of accuracy), it's hardly real evidence. Still, this book is truly a pleasure -- you get a quick but deeply informative lesson of boxing history since its modern inception, a deeper insight in boxing strategy and techniques, and a panel of coaches that are a pleasure to hear from. Highly recommended!

As a competitor and nearing 60 years as a Boxing fan. I found this book to be both a great and a troubling read. Great as it revives lost history and troubling because it's honest appraisal of the problems with this once great sport today.

If you're involved with the boxing business in any capacity, fighter, trainer, promoter, manager, or fan, this book is a must read. It's hard hitting, and a bit controversial to those who don't understand the modern day limitations of the sport, but the author makes compelling arguments why the sport has de-evolved from its past glory. Even if you don't agree with the argument, there is a lot to be learned from examining it in great detail.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and looking at the photos. I have saved it as a reference resource and look forward to more published works by this brilliant author. If you have an interest in the history of boxing and would like an expert's take on the sport and the boxers, I highly recommend you read and retain the work of Mike Silver.

This book is an analysis of whether the boxers of yesteryear (1920 to the early 1950's) were better than the fighters of today. The author goes through a list of attributes of fighters (number of fights, conditioning, techniques, quality of trainers etc) and gives a number of experts opinions on why the past was better than today. Some of the arguments are compelling (the fighters of yesteryear would gain so much experience by fighting every few weeks rather than today when they fight a few times a year) but one could also make the argument that one could not fight top contenders every few weeks without sustaining serious damage. They would have to have fought lesser talent between the fights with the better fighters (nothing wrong with this, great way to hone the skills and keep in shape while earning a payday) but the boxing fan of today won't pay to see a Pacquaio fight a lesser talent who has a limited chance of beating him. Boxing is much more of a business than it was 80 years ago and today, it is all about the money and less so about the fans and making the best fights. All in all, Mike Silver's book is a top read, contains some interesting ideas and makes one think.

To understand what boxing has become, you need to know where it has been. With great detail and expert analysis, Silver carefully breaks down why the golden agers of boxing (1920s thru the 1950s) were much better than any group of boxers since. Some of the many reasons include: During that era there were many, many more boxing gyms, fight clubs, and registered pro boxers than today and significantly more than the decades that followed (60s thru to today). You don't have to be a sport scientist to know more competition equals a better crop of athletes. Boxing as a sport did not progress like other sports, like football, basketball, track, soccer etc. It de-evolved. He breaks all of this down. This book completely changed how I understand boxing as a fan and as a boxer. If you care about boxing at all, read this book.

This jeremiad against contemporary professional boxing is a clean body blow to devoted boxing fans like myself. Except for the courageous boxers, no area is spared from incisive, merciless, and (for the most part) convincing criticism. Still, it is clear that this book is a labor of love for boxing

expert Mr. Silver. It is full of observations from leading trainers, commentators, and even the celebrated ballet dancer and impresario Edwin Vallela. Boxing fans like myself will learn a great deal, if only (what we call in my field) "Socratic ignorance," knowing that we know nothing of real importance. It deserves a still wider audience, for it addresses a decline in decency, intelligence, and values that has produced so much cynicism into our political life, and into so many areas of our culture.

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