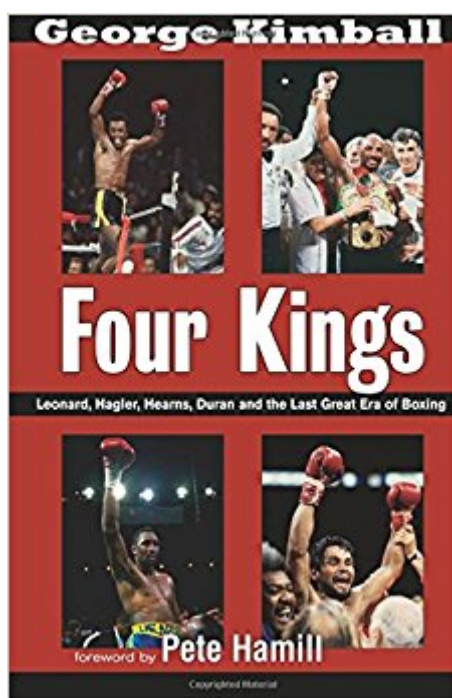


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Four Kings: Leonard, Hagler, Hearns, Duran And The Last Great Era Of Boxing



Synopsis

Their names are legendary: Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Thomas Hit Man Hearn, and Roberto Duran. They were exceptional boxers with unique combinations of power and speed. In another era, with few rivals of equal caliber, each might have held championship belts for years on end. But as it was, they matured together in the 1980s and fought each other as middleweights. With unforgettable courage and skill, they ruled the ring and ushered in the last Golden Age of boxing. George Kimball takes an authoritative look at the rivalries that fueled this great era in sports history. Veteran sports journalist Kimball reported on every one of the Four Kings' nine internecine fights. Here his eye-witness coverage is enhanced by recent interviews with each of the boxers and other seasoned analysts. The result is a fast-paced, blow-by-blow account of four extraordinary adversaries and a remarkable boxing epoch.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review Consider the state of boxing today. Not easy, is it? It's hard to name a prominent fighter. The audience that once gravitated to the sweet science has been diffused among an alphabet soup of competing organizations presenting overhyped, pay-per-view events. It wasn't always so. Roberto Duran, Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvin Hagler, and Thomas "Hit Man" Hearn were all household names in the 1980s, held multiple titles in or around the middleweight division, and fought among themselves nine times. Kimball, a columnist for the Boston Herald for 25 years, covered all nine of those epic confrontations among 400 other title bouts. He relies on his notes and recollections of the fights as well as fresh interviews with the

fighters, their handlers, their managers, and others of note. His accounts of the fights are riveting blow-by-blows, the "big event" context is palpably rendered, and each of the fighters re-emerges from the mists of memory as colorful and compelling as ever. Boxing fans with a little gray in their hair will savor Kimball's work. Younger fans? If they find their way to the book, maybe they'll understand the difference between greatness and hype. --Wes Lukowsky --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"George Kimball's excellent and accurate account of the grandeur--indeed the majesty--of the confrontations among Hagler, Hearns, Leonard, and Duran is an exciting read. I highly recommend it." -- Bob Arum, CEO, Top Rank, Inc. "Kimball's accounts of the fights are riveting blow-by-blows, the 'big event' context is palpably rendered, and each of the fighters reemerges from the mists of memory as colorful and compelling as ever. Boxing fans . . . will savor Kimball's work."

--"Booklist" "Bottom line: Check out the book." --Don Steinberg, ESPN.com "Very accurate and well-researched . . . a phenomenon . . . well-written. I couldn't put it down. I loaned it to a friend and he won't give it back" --Emanuel Steward, World Champion Boxing trainer "Boxing's last Golden Age gets the book it deserves. Kimball's breezy, detail-packed book . . . provides vivid, knowledgeable accounts of the action. He also draws clear colorful portraits of [the] four fighters." "--Sports Illustrated "Chosen for Booklist Online's 10 Top Sports Books of 2009" "George Kimball is one of America's best-loved sportswriters and Four Kings shows why. With skill, grace and humor, he brings to life a remarkable era and four uniquely gifted athletes." --Jeremy Schaap, ESPN reporter and author, "Cinderella Man: James J. Braddock", "Max Baer and the Greatest Upset in Boxing History" "Kimball writes with insight and humor. The bigger the fight, the better he tells it." --Thomas Hauser, author, "Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times" "Four Kings" is a thriller and George Kimball a prince among sportswriters . . . an epic poem of a book, a book that lifts the heart." --Frank McCourt, author, "Angela's Ashes", "Tis", and "Teacher Man" "Kimball's accounts of the fights are riveting blow-by-blows, the "big event" context is palpably rendered, and each of the fighters re-emerges from the mists of memory as colorful and compelling as ever. Boxing fans . . . will savor Kimball's work." "--Booklist" "A terrific book. Kimball was there and never missed a moment of it. His account of the fighters, the fights and the colorful supporting players is rich with insights and details." --Vincent Patrick, author, "The Pope of Greenwich Village" and "Family Business" "Boxing's last Golden Age gets the book it deserves. Kimball's breezy, detail-packed book . . . provides vivid, knowledgeable accounts of the action. He also draws clear colorful portraits of [the] four fighters."

--Sports Illustrated"

Pete Hamill, American journalist and novelist, writes in his Foreword to George Kimball's book "This book is about the last Golden Age of boxing. That is, it is about a time when the matches themselves transcended the squalor of the business side of the sport, and focused only on the men who fought." This lucky reviewer was privileged to see the end of this era, to watch the last two of the nine super fights these four boxers fought with each other. Thus I was delighted to find this beautiful book, which told me details I had never heard, even though I followed the fighters and the sport closely. "Four Kings: Leonard, Hagler, Hearns, Duran and the Last Great Era of Boxing" radiates the feeling boxing fans had in these glorious days. Naturally, all of it began with the childhood of the four kings, Duran, Hagler, Hearns, and Leonard. Please note that I listed their names in alphabetical order because I do not want to give preference to any of them; the book makes clear how each of them helped to bring out the best in all others. Kimball tells us how it happened. Duran came from the very poorest circumstances: "Food was scarce; unable to care for him, his mother literally gave the boy away on several occasions. He (Duran) followed Toti to a boxing gym at the age of eight, and had his first amateur bout a year later." Hagler was shy: "On his first night Hagler once again watched in silence. On the second, Goody (Petronelli) walked over and asked with a smile, "Hey, kid, do you want to learn how to fight?" "That's what I'm here for," said Marvin. Goody told him to come back the next night and bring along his gear. Gear? All he had was a pair of cutoff jeans and some tennis shoes." Hearns was skinny, worked hard, and was grateful to be able to participate at out-of-town trips Kronk Recreation Center's Emmanuel Stewart arranged for. Leonard, who among boxers was described as having "choirboy"-looks really sang in a church choir before he started boxing. The book also tells the stories of their trainers, promoters, and gyms. All of them evolved with their respective fighters. There are also the stories in connection with their names. Ray Charles, after who Leonard was named, sang "America the Beautiful" before the second Leonard-Duran fight, at the Superdome, in New Orleans. Leonard won that fight. Hagler had his name legally changed from Marvin Nathaniel to Marvelous Marvin Hagler. Hearns had gotten his nickname because: "Tommy's like a Hit Man," the manager observed. "He does his business and then gets out of town." And Duran had more colorful descriptions assigned to him and his name, than anybody's mother would like to know. Kimball's writing style is fast-paced, information-packed, and entertaining. Fight Hagler vs Duran: "The rows of scar tissue Hagler wore like combat ribbons around his eyebrows could provide an inviting target, even for a boxer more observant of the Marquis of Queensberry rules than Roberto Duran." Readers, who may not know about the

"Queensberry rules for the sport of boxing", (written in the 19th century these are the rules, on which the rules of modern boxing are based), as well as other facts, might have a harder time with this book; boxing fans however will be mesmerized by the riveting content Kimball manages to tie together to complete a beautiful picture of the boxers, the sport and the times. Those, who miss the days when boxing was shown on the networks rather than pay-per-view, when ratings came from who fought who and not from manipulated or hyped stories, and Tommy Hearn (hailing from Detroit) could be "Motor City Cobra" with pride, will love this book. In a way it is a neat thing that this book was written now. I read it close to my computer and watched some of the fights again on Youtube. If you are ever looking for a gift for an important man in your life age 55+, who lived through the Golden Era, I recommend to buy this book. The chances to go wrong with "Four Kings" are remote. Thank you, George Kimball, for this treasure. Gisela Hausmann - author & blogger

Having watched just about every fight these four legends were in, this book took me back to those days and nights past. The Heavyweights get most of the attention in the Boxing World, and draw the biggest money. But even with some of the "wars" the big guns have waged, the FOUR, that this book is about, changed the view of boxing forever. They battled each other, and it was WAR, and not one of them came out the same again. You will be taken into every aspect of what big fights consist of..... From contract signings, to promo tours, to training camps, to weigh in's and finally, into the ring. Great read for any boxing fan, or historian.

A potentially great read if not for the author's tendency to reference every person, relevant and otherwise, tangential to the careers of these four amazing fighters. Fortunately Mr. Kimball applies a filter after the first hundred pages, and the fascinating and often funny story he tells begins to take hold. It's worth plowing through the early name dropping. But in a book that chronicles a lot of pain, the author might have saved the reader some.

I read sometime ago in a popular boxing column that "Four Kings: Leonard, Hagler, Hearn, Duran and the Last Great Era of Boxing" was among the finest sports books ever written. Having been a boxing fan for the last decade or so, buying the Kindle edition was a no-brainer. Except that Four Kings does no justice to the golden age of boxing. There is no question that Sugar Ray Leonard, Marvelous Marvin Hagler, Thomas Hearn, and Roberto Duran are all-time greats. But they seem like cardboard cutouts in Kimball's account. Where is the psychological drama of getting in the ring? There was never a sense that these were real men bleeding and sweating in the ring.

Every cross-over fight (i.e. "No Mas", "The War", etc.) is covered, but huge swaths of the fighters' lives are left out. Would it have been too much to ask for a chapter or two covering the childhood and families of each of the 'four kings'. I get a better sense of who boxers are on HBO's 24/7! Some hard-core boxing fans may enjoy the book just due to the volume of information of what is likely some of their favorite fighters. Casual fans will not be won over and those that truly love the sweet science will wish a more thorough biographer had penned this work. Whatever you think of the careers of Leonard, Hagler, Hearns, and Duran--the golden age of boxing deserves a more compelling narrative.*On a technical note, there are annoying and persistent formatting problems with the numerical character spacing of the Kindle edition (e.g. 1 60 instead of 160). This appears to be sloppy editing, I have not seen this on any other kindle text.

If you are a real boxing fan, and you are genuinely interested in these boxers (Duran, Hagler, Hearns, and Leonard) and the era in which they fought, you should give this a read. The first few chapters are a little long and slow-going, only because the author wanted to properly describe the formative years of each boxer. But once you get to the big-time fights between these four icons, it's a detailed and exciting account of some of the greatest fighters ever. The author does a great job of objective reporting throughout. He clearly holds all four boxers in the highest regard, and the book does a great job of paying homage to Hagler, Hearns, Duran, and Leonard. The only reason I gave it 4 stars and not 5 is because I thought the author could have spent a little less time detailing the early years of each boxer. Regardless, if you are a boxing fan who remembers these fighters, or have heard of their greatness, you should give it a read.

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