

Honouring a boxing legend

Today chats with Fort McMurray's Wayne Bourque about his induction into Wood Buffalo's Sports Hall of Fame

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Today staff

The Wood Buffalo Sports Hall of Fame have announced the first inductee of the class of 2012: legendary boxer and trainer Wayne Bourque.

"The Flurry from Fort McMurray" Bourque would become one of the premier amateur boxers in the country, winning three North American Native boxing titles, four provincial champions and four golden gloves. Bourque also qualified for the 1984 Olympics but was unable to compete due to a knee injury. Bourque's amateur career is estimated to include 130 bouts with a record of 109-21.

Instead of turning pro, Bourque moved to Toronto in the late 80s and would eventually open a boxercise facility called Centre Ring. Bourque returned to competition in 2009 where at the age of 49 he captured the Ringside World Championship for Masters age 40-50 in the light heavyweight category.

Bourque took the time out of his busy schedule to answer some questions for the Today about his induction and his career.

Today: What was your reaction when you found out you are going to be in the WBSHOF?

Bourque: I was overwhelmed, I was thrilled and the more I think about it, the happier I get. I just can't stop smiling. McMurray was an isolated community back then and we used to have to travel gravel roads and it was tough. To get recognize, not only for boxing, the sport that I did, but after the sport with my gym out here in Toronto, I was just overwhelmed. I am thrilled.

I want to bring three or four of my buddies from Fort McMurray to the dinner, bring my fam-

ily and get a couple of tables.

Do you still maintain a strong connection with your hometown?

To be honest, because my life is so busy, I barely come once a year to visit my mother who lives in Anzac. But I follow the hockey players, we keep in touch to find out who is doing what. I always talk to people from home if I see them, I ask them, 'what are the facilities like?' 'How are we doing?' 'What's the caliber of baseball?'

We had Joe Young in baseball, he was doing pretty good for a while there. But I always tell people I'm from Fort McMurray.

Looking back at your career in the ring, what would you say is your career highlight?

That's a tough one. As a junior or a senior boxer, you don't really grasp or appreciate what you're doing because you love it, you love the training. Everything I ever did was a highlight just to go somewhere because I loved it, and I mean that sincerely.

But I think that the highlight was when I went back in the ring after 20 years for the World Championships. I fought a great guy with a lot of fights and won my category and that's it because I appreciated it more. I just sunk down and said, 'Wow!'

I took a year of my life off and trained hard; I stuck to all the kind of training I used to do before. I had some great sparring with a guy who's fighting national championship. I felt like I was really overwhelmed. I mean, winning junior nationals was fun and provincials and the golden gloves.

As a junior, I remember the first time I went to the States as a young kid from Fort McMurray, it was a big deal. I remember it plain as day — travelling was a lot of fun in boxing. It was

a way to go see other countries and stuff.

Do you have any regrets in your career?

I would say, no, I don't regret anything that I did. I mean, I wish we had better training facilities there when I was fighting like they had elsewhere, but that's ... just a wish.

As a boxer sometimes that stuff can be in the back of your mind. We didn't have updated equipment in the club and I wish someday I will give back what was given to me and I'll work with kids.

Right now, I've been in the business 23 years and I've had a couple of fighters, but you have to spend money on them and still pay the rent because fighters don't have any money. But someday I'll do that.

I regret that I blew out my knee, I guess, but you can't focus on that stuff, you move on.

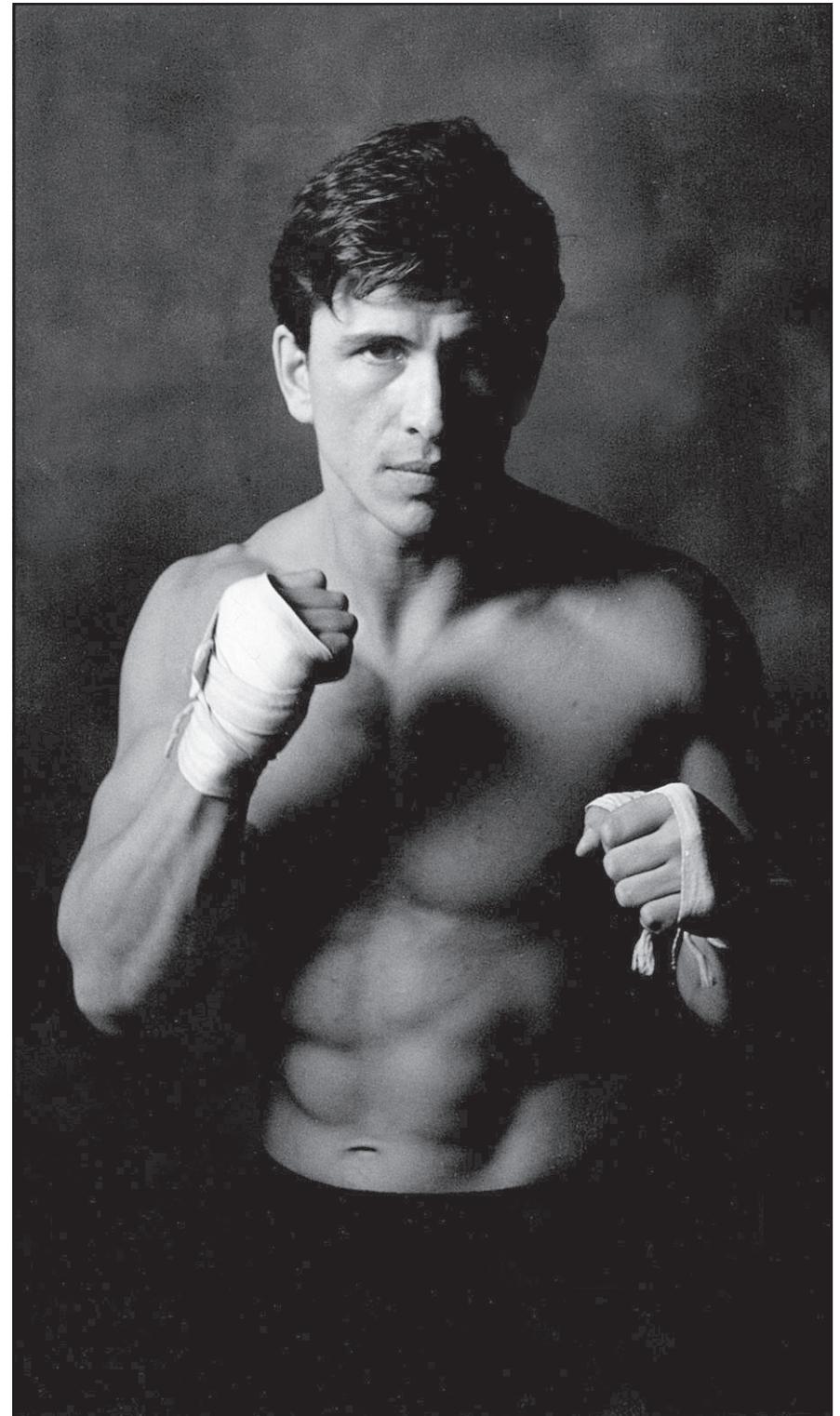
What is your advice to Fort McMurray athletes?

My advice to Fort McMurray athletes is that you are just as good as anybody else. It's the advice my father gave me. Train hard. Training is the ultimate for every sport, it's the best you can do. The best conditioned athlete — and I stress this to the people I work with in Toronto — it's all about your conditioning and your state of mind.

If you're in shape you know that what you don't have in talent you can make up for. You can have a lot of talent too, but you need to be in shape. If you want to be the best you have to train like the best, there is no in between.

It's all about the training and listening to advice to other people. You have to listen to people that have maybe been through the same thing. Listen and train hard.

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SUPPLIED PHOTO

Wayne "The Flurry from Fort McMurray" Bourque, one of the premier amateur boxers in the country, will now make his way back home inducted into the Wood Buffalo Sports Hall of Fame.