



## Facing Ali: 15 Fighters / 15 Stories

*Stephen Brunt*

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Muhammad Ali cast a blinding light on his sport, on the tumultuous times in which he reigned as champion, and on all the people who surrounded him. That included the fighters brave enough to stand alone, in the ring with the greatest heavyweight champion of all time.

Ali's own story has been told often, but the tales of those who faced him have been mostly overlooked. For each, the moments alone in the ring with Ali changed their lives. **FACING ALI** tells the stories, in the fighters' own words, of fifteen men from around the world--from famous names like Joe Frazier, George Foreman, and Henry Cooper, to lesser lights like Tunney Hunsaker, Jergen Blin, and George Chuvalo. **FACING ALI** offers a unique perspective on what it was like to fight Ali, and gives new insights into the character of a boxer who is arguably the most recognized man on the planet.

## **Facing Ali: 15 Fighters / 15 Stories Details**

Date : Published April 1st 2003 by Lyons Press (first published October 8th 2002)

ISBN : 9781585748297

Author : Stephen Brunt

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : Sports and Games, Sports, Biography, Nonfiction, Combat, Martial Arts



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## From Reader Review Facing Ali: 15 Fighters / 15 Stories for online ebook

### Christopher says

Stephen Brunt is hands down, Canada's best sports writer. True, that's a bit like being the most handsome guy in AC/DC. But let's give the man his dues.

This is an interesting read, looking at some of the lesser lights/also rans who took on The Champ, Muhammad Ali. These include Jurgen Blin, Joe Bugner and of course, The Bayonne Bleeder Chuck Wepner, whose life story inspired (\*cough\*) Stallone. For an interesting look at the latter and the associated lawsuit against Sly, ESPN did a documentary called The Real Rocky.

Anyway, each of the fighters, some notable (the awesome Ken Norton), some obscure (Karl Mildenberger - to me anyway - I know Max Schmeling, but didn't know this Teuton with the southpaw style that confused Ali, briefly) describe the hype and hope surrounding their squared circle encounters.

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### Bax says

An interesting approach to the Greatest, interviewing a cross-section of his opponents.

The book is more interesting for the biographical snapshots of these (mostly unknown) opponents than for the insights it provides about Ali. Boxers as a group are not known for their penetrating insight, and the author/interviewer does little to coax them into meaningful reveries.

An interesting B-list read on the Sweet Science.

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### Jake says

What would it have been like to stand across the ring from one of the greatest fighters of the twentieth century? How does fighting a legend change or influence a person? Those questions are at the heart of Brunt's *Facing Ali*, which traces Ali's career not through the man himself, but through the men he fought.

Brunt begins chronologically, starting with Ali's first professional opponent, and moving through until he comes to Larry Holmes, the man who beat Ali in Ali's final night in the ring.

Each man gets a chapter all to himself, in which Brunt recounts the interviews he's conducted, along with providing some background on the men before the faced Ali, and their fate afterward. His writing is casual, but engaging, and he does a wonderful job of bringing the men he's interviewing to life.

While all of Ali's big name opponents are featured here, I actually found the stories of the lesser known men more fascinating in some ways. While Brunt does have some good things to say about Foreman, Fraizer, Holmes, and Ken Norton, it was the lives of men like Tunney Hunsaker (who spent most of his life as well-respected small town sheriff), or Jurgen Blin (a German boxer, who fought Ali when Ali couldn't fight in the

states). These are the stories of men who were caught in the wake of a legend, who brushed with him, but are somehow forgotten when the legend itself is told.

Fans of any combat sport, particularly boxing, ought to pick this one up, as should anyone who's just interested in the legendarium that grows up around our modern athletes.

(Like this review? Visit my Amazon store (<http://astore.amazon.com/jakereveiwsb...>) and pick up a copy, or any number of other titles I've reviewed and recommended.)

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### **Roderick says**

Great read--interviews with 15 boxers who fought Ali, tomata-cans to other champions. You get wonderful insight into the various men, fascinating, introspective looks by each about their lives Fun read for any boxing fan, especially fans of Ali.

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### **Christine says**

I don't know if this is any good. But I said I'd take up a sport, and Dustin's got the football covered, and baseball dies with that whole steroid thingy for me. Oh and I like violence... so boxing it is...

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### **Robert S says**

*"I done wrestled with an alligator, I done tussled with a whale; handcuffed lightning, thrown thunder in jail; only last week, I murdered a rock, injured a stone, hospitalised a brick; I'm so mean I make medicine sick."*  
- Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali's shadow has loomed over boxing since the first time he stepped into the ring. No other individual has made more of an impact on the sweet science in the last seventy years than the man who called himself the greatest. Ali wasn't just legendary in the ring, but he was a man of controversy outside of it as well. Boxing had a personality like no other, a man who went beyond the usual sports platitudes of being humble and instead said he was the best but went out there and proved it.

*Facing Ali* looks at fifteen men, ranging from Joe Frazier to the unknown that took Ali on in the boxing ring. The book can be considered fifteen mini-biographies of each man. Their backgrounds, some of their major fights, their fight with Ali, and what happened afterwards is all laid out here in over a little over 300 pages. Its interesting to see their opinions differ of the man of just not his character inside the ring but outside of it as well. While Ali may have garnered the lion share of the attention, all of these men had their own stories to tell as well and Brunt has given them a voice.

My only real issue with *Facing Ali* is a lack of more in-depth description of their fights with Ali on their perspective and thoughts about the sport of boxing in general. Even in a book that is suppose to be focusing on the men who Ali faced, his shadow continues to loom over them. Although as time goes on, it seems like that will forever be the case.

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### **Cwn\_annwn\_13 says**

Facing Ali is more or less a collection of 15 mini biographies of 15 Muhammad Ali opponents with an emphasis on their fights with Ali. You have some of the great fighters that Ali squared off with but also some of the no hopers and opponents that he faced also. It starts with Tunney Hunsaker, who he fought in his pro debut and ends with Larry Holmes who he fought in his second to last fight. Some of these guys ended up in not the best shape financially or neurologically but others seem to be doing well. Hunsaker is obviously brain damaged. Holmes is still bitter about not getting the credit he deserves as a great champion. Foreman comes off like a self effacing public relations man. Joe Fraizer still seems to have an underlying hatred for Ali. George Chuvalo has had unbelievable tragedy in his life. I learned a lot of interesting details about some of the European fighters Ali fought. I also wish Jimmy Ellis would have been one of the fighters featured in Facing Ali. It's not one of what I would consider one of the must read boxing history classics but overall I enjoyed reading this although he could have dug a lot deeper with some of these guys.

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### **Paul Colver says**

I read the first 3 chapters and it's a readable interesting book. Chapter 3 is on George Chavulo began well but later goes into Chavulo's family problems. to what end? Seemed far removed from what the author says in the preface he intends to do. I almost quit at this point but the remainder of the book was engrossing and filled with insight about boxing, Ali and the fighters included who fought him.

Great first chapter on Tunney Hunsaker Ali's first fight and the sweet relationship that developed between the two men. Tunney at the time of the interview remembers a joke but nothing else - his wife tells the story. (Odd how one minute there is a move afoot to get boxers into helmets and then suddenly there is mixed martial arts - a super spin doctored name - should be called 'brutality in a cage" that will lead to brain damage for each of fighters WITHOUT EXCEPTION.

I give the book high marks.

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### **Mario says**

This was an interesting take on Ali's career because the focus was on his opponents rather than Ali himself. And whilst I've read many great books on Ali and already knew what some of his high profile opponents thought of him, this book contained background information and insight into and from some of the journeymen who are just a footnote in history and that is what I liked.

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### **Stephen says**

I have to say that this book was one of the best books I could have ever read. I loved the way it was formatted but what it did for me was get me back into reading books. I had read a good number of books and then all of a sudden stopped. Then my roommate picked me up this book for X-mas and I pounded thru it before January 1st. I was back on my reading bing.

This book has a cool format as it is broken into 15 different chapters and talks about 15 different opponents that Ali faced in his storied boxing career. Its great for those who do not know as much about Ali, and those who do. Its a fun read and I recommend it highly.

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### **Teena in Toronto says**

My husband read this book last month and thought I would enjoy it ... and I did.

I had only heard of about five of the fifteen boxers but it was still interesting to read their stories ... where they came from and where they are now. Some knew going in they would get beat and did it for the paycheque.

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### **James Evans says**

A real knockout of a book for all Ali fans.

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### **Kym Robinson says**

This book covers 15 of Muhammad Ali's opponents over the varying stages of his career. The book seeks to give a voice to some of those who were over shadowed by the Legendary Ali.

It is a good read and has some fun fight fan friendly anecdotes. This is a book that is especially appreciated in conjunction to watching the fights featured within.

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### **David says**

I'm giving this one a perfect 5 star rating largely because I really enjoyed the premise of the book — 15 different perspectives on Ali all from people with first-hand experience against him. Each perspective is well-paced ... I didn't feel any of them dragged on, and they each had unique stories to share. Fantastic read.

My two takeaways ... Celebrating Ali as the GOAT is more marketing than anything. Sure he won some famous fights, but his war stance/name change left him fighting a bunch of tomato cans along the way.

Joe Frazier is a vindictive moron, who needs to get over it already. Celebrate your career, instead of staying angry over an opponent who helped you fill arenas.

Strongly recommend this read, especially for fight fans.

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## **Thomas says**

A cautionary tale about the fight game. Though it is not a tale, but true accounts of the lives of 15 fighters that at some point had faced Muhammad Ali in the ring. So make that 16 fighters since you include Ali himself. The fight game is not glamorous and also not like watching an underdog story like "Rocky" -- but more like watching "Raging Bull" or "Champion." The majority of the fighters in the book had major health issues, be it memory, physical or both. Most had major financial issues being poor management and lack of skill once their fight careers were over. All of the fighters included never knew when to say enough is enough. So all made comebacks well beyond the talent they had left would carry them. Most of the fighters carry grudges or sour grapes of the "what could have been." The only fighter interviewed for a story section that managed to keep above most of the basic fighter issues is George Foreman. As for the man himself Muhammad Ali -- it is sad in what has become of him physically. Regardless if you agree if he was the greatest fighter of all time, he was a very special athlete and figure of a different era in time. The likes of the sport or athletics in general will not likely have the opportunity to view again.

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