

... 'Boxing is a fundamental, beautiful sport'

BOXER FROM PAGE 1

balance, keep the chin tucked in, jab and step, punch from the hip (grind that foot into the floor!) — he tells them that boxing is a sport of beauty, that it requires "incredible conditioning," and that boxers are typically the nicest people in the world.

"A guy flips you off in traffic, you come in here and pound the heavy bag for awhile, and the next time you see him, you wave and say 'Have a nice day.'"

Those who get to know him a little better discover deeper levels.

John Pickering, a Boulder deputy district attorney who raves about Gaudette's gym, says, "I'm punching the heavy bag, about two minutes away from throwing up on my shoes, and Dave's quoting Nietzsche — 'Just remember John, that which does not kill us, makes us stronger.'"

This philosophical bent is not a facade. Gaudette traces his love for the sport to a deep-seated need to understand the meaning of life.

"I always wanted to investigate what fundamental meaning is, the meaning of life, the meaning of truth. What is the primordial? I'm still looking for that," he says, shrugging. "As Plato said, 'The unexamined life is not worth living.'"

It was a need that motivated him to study for the priesthood at a Franciscan high school in New Hampshire and eventually brought him to Boulder to study comparative philosophy at CU.

"I muddled through and got a master's degree in 1980," Gaudette said.

That search led Gaudette back to boxing, a sport that he first learned while in high school. "Boxing is a fundamental, beautiful sport," he says. "It gravitates toward the basic. There is a real art to it, a real skill.

Gaudette learned to fight in high school and competed through college, where he won the New Hampshire state title as a lightweight in 1969 and the Southern New England AAU Junior Welterweight Championship in 1971. During that time, he was managed by the Fiumelli brothers,

who also managed Marvin Hagler, and even met the legendary Angelo Dundee.

He opened his gym about three years ago and moved it to its current location on 28th Street nearly two years ago.

Bob Morgan, who moved to Boulder from Chicago two years ago and won a NCAA national title in the 147-pound category while on a boxing team at the University of Wisconsin in 1952, has become Gaudette's business adviser. Gaudette invited Morgan to sit in on the interview Friday "because sometimes I have a hard time talking."

Morgan says the sacrifice and dedication required by the sport of boxing bonds athletes like no others. "I'm going back this spring for a reunion of the 1952 boxing team," he said. "That should tell you something about the friendships you form. You go through stuff most people don't."

Morgan thinks back on those days. "I don't have any other friends from college."

Gaudette says most of the people who come to his gym do so for the conditioning, and there are half a dozen letters on one wall from people who say they've gotten in the best shape of their lives in Gaudette's gym.

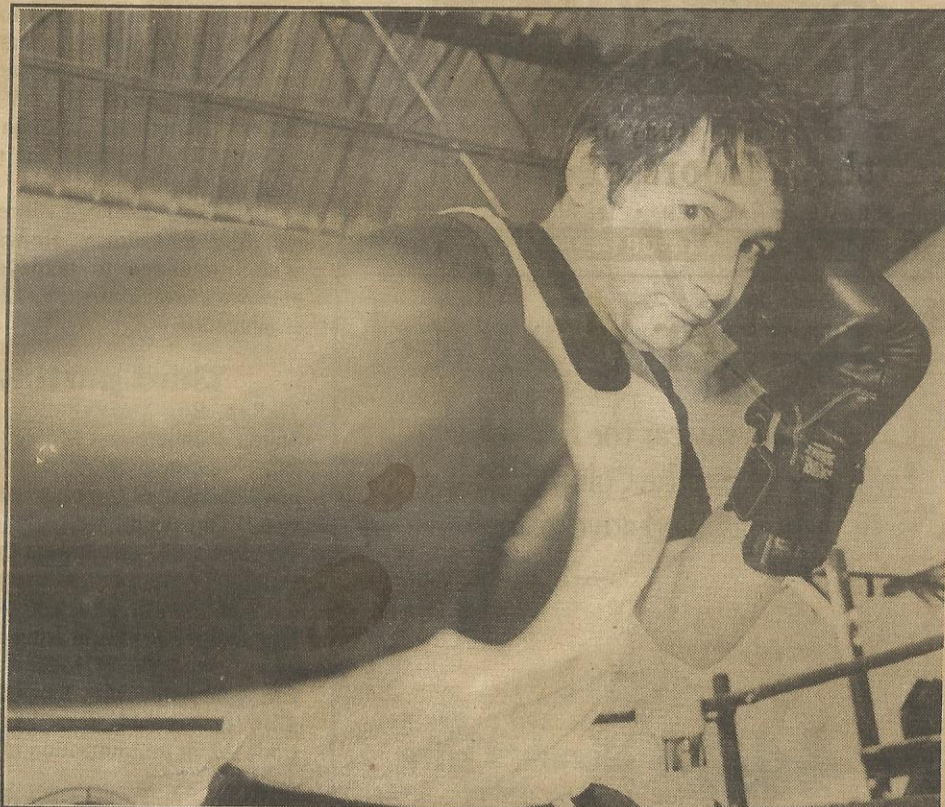
But some come for self-defense, and a few do come for competition. Gaudette makes sure they're ready before he lets them step into the ring to fight. At any given time, about a third of his students are women.

"We get walk-ins who want to spar," he says. "But I can't let them do it. There's too much liability." But after getting a student in shape, he will let them spar.

"I try to put them in with someone with more experience so they can control the action," he says. "I want them to have a positive experience."

Occasionally, he gets someone who wants to show how tough they are. But those kind of students don't last long. Gaudette has an "anti-bully" clause as well as a "respect" clause in his contracts.

"Have respect for the gym and respect for each other," reminds a prominently posted sign.



Colorado Daily/Christine Flala

Dave Gaudette, who teaches boxing at the Front Range Boxing Academy, shows some of his stuff.

A typical workout consists of three to four miles of roadwork (running), one or two three-minute rounds of shadow boxing, four or five rounds on the heavy bag, three on the speed bag, three on the double-end bag, three rounds of jumping rope followed by one or two more rounds of shadow boxing.

There's a 30-second to one-minute pause between rounds. The prospective students find themselves progressively more challenged as they go through the workout. The speed bag is bad enough ("I got no timing," says one woman. "That's why you're here," Gaudette tells her.) But the double-end bag, which is suspended between two elastic

cords, is positively intimidating because it hits back.

"Lean in, lean in; it won't hit you," Gaudette says. The students remain unconvinced, but find it good for a laugh anyway.

Summing it up, Gaudette says, "Boxing is like a chess game, except you have to be in shape and watch for the shots."

An hour flies by and Gaudette, who has no trouble at all talking, possibly becomes a tad abashed by the fact.

"I'm not that interesting of a guy," he says.

For more information, call Dave Gaudette at the Front Range Boxing Academy, 546-9747.