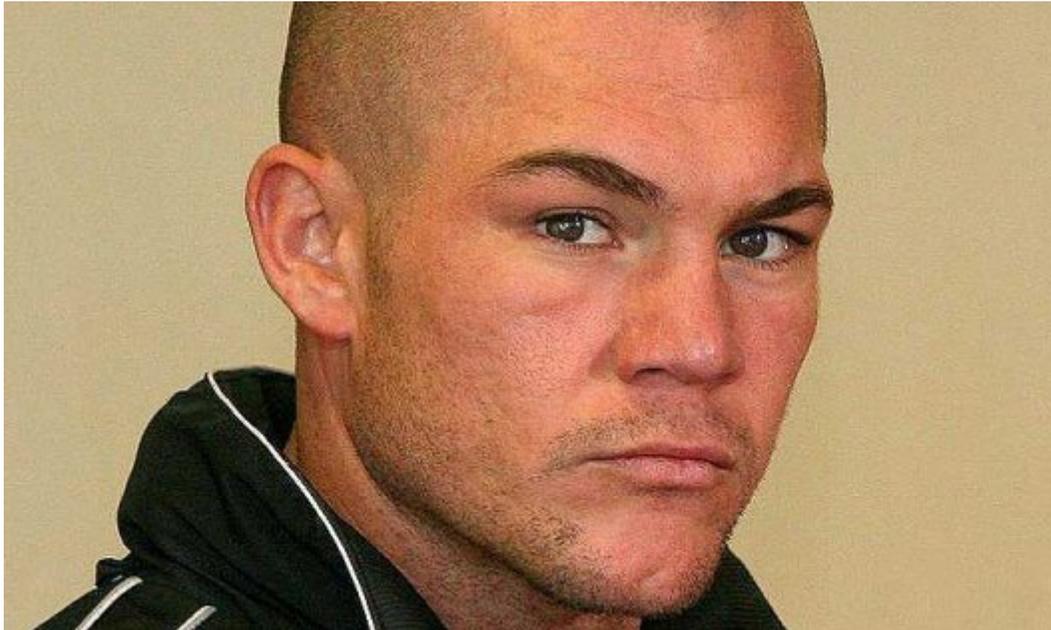


# Jamie Moore: Still the Fighter's Fighter

By Caryn A. Tate on November 4, 2017



*"I'm lucky, I'm privileged, to be able to work with good fighters." (Martin Rickett/PA Wire)*

"I'm getting to work with some terrific fighters—Martin Murray, Tommy Coyle, Rocky Fielding, Carl Frampton...these are real top-class fighters..."

In boxing, being a good trainer is a delicate and difficult balancing act. A coach must inspire, motivate, and teach—and know when the time is right for each of those talents. But he must also understand everything from frequently overlooked intangibles in a fighter's style to the deepest regions of his fighter's personality.

For some fighters, there is no better chief second than someone who was a fighter himself—particularly if that former fighter was also a fantastic boxer with a gift for breaking down instruction and clearly articulating a boxers' strengths and weaknesses.

Jamie Moore is such a trainer. A former boxer from Salford, Greater Manchester, he developed a rabid fanbase and earned a living legend status in the UK for his gutsy yet highly skilled performances. Moore now finds himself helping other fighters navigate the complexity of their boxing careers, and he prides himself on creating a positive, enjoyable atmosphere in his gym.

"I've created a nice, laid back sort of environment," Jamie said. "Boxing's such a tough sport, especially in the top end. My big thing in my gym is if you're enjoying what you're doing, then it makes it so much easier. So we create a good atmosphere. Nigel Travis, who helps me in the

gym, we get the work in when we need to, but also we enjoy ourselves and we're laughing. I think that's really important.

"Someone said to me once, 'If you never want to work a day in your life, find something you love to do and find a way to make it pay.' And that definitely is what I feel like I'm doing. I go to work every day and it doesn't feel like work. I thoroughly enjoy what I'm doing. There are stressful days, don't get me wrong, but at the end of the day, it doesn't feel as stressful as it would if I wasn't enjoying the job."

Many boxers have been joining Moore's team recently. "I'm getting to work with some terrific fighters—Martin Murray, Tommy Coyle, Rocky Fielding, Carl Frampton...these are real top-class fighters," Moore said. "I feel privileged and honored for the fact that they respect my views on boxing. I try to simplify when I explain stuff to them. I don't believe in complicating things. So I try and break it down and make it simple, and they seem to get it."

Moore revealed in a recent article on Sky Sports that there is no contract to train his latest addition, Carl Frampton, and that he has never had a contract to train a fighter. Jamie discussed why he takes this approach. "In this game, I think trust plays a big part. You have to be able to trust the people you work with. Steve Wood (Moore's former manager), for instance, is a great guy. He's such a trustworthy person. And that was why he managed me from my first professional fight to my last professional fight. There were times when we had a conflict in opinions on things, and maybe jointly we made the wrong decision on the direction my career went in. But at the end of the day, we sort of learned from those mistakes."

When discussing his career as a fighter and his journey to becoming a successful trainer, it's clear Jamie has given it a lot of thought. "My boxing career, when I look back at it now, I don't really believe that it was, in fact, the be all end all. I think it was maybe part of my learning as a trainer. So my boxing career was basically learning on the job so I could then pass on those lessons and those experiences to fighters now, in the future. I had a successful career—I would call it a successful career. I didn't challenge for a world title, but at the end of the day, I didn't expect to win any titles as a professional, so anything was a bonus. But I think the experiences and the stuff I went through as a fighter are the main things to take from it—not necessarily the victories or the Fights of the Year I was involved in. But just the lessons that I learned along the way. I'm now in the position where I can pass those lessons on and help other fighters. And I'd much rather help other people than do stuff for myself. I get so much gratification from helping people rather than doing stuff for myself."

When Jamie was a young amateur fighter learning the ropes, one experience against a future superstar changed his perspective forever. "When I was 15 years old I fought Ricky Hatton. He beat me up and stopped me with a body shot. It was the most pain I'd ever been in at that point in my life. Straight away afterwards I thought to myself, I need to master how to do that!" After more than twenty years of friendship with Hatton, Moore laughed at the memory. "I'm a big, big believer in body punching. That's gonna send you a long way into getting your opponent really tired. If you can become a world class body puncher, then I believe you can go a long, long way in the sport."

On top of being a boxing trainer and former fighter, Jamie remains a fan of the sport. Looking at his own fighting style, and occasionally even the kit he chose for a fight (on occasion he sported black trunks and short black boots, inspired by one of his biggest heroes), it is perhaps not a surprise who his favorite boxers are to watch.

"I love all the guys who liked going toe-to-toe. I liked Nigel Benn, Arturo Gatti, Marvin Hagler, Mike Tyson—I love Mike Tyson for his explosiveness. Roy Jones, Jr.—I believe if he'd retired after the John Ruiz fight, he would've gone down as the greatest fighter ever. I think he maybe

let his legacy fall a little bit because he carried on for too long. Sugar Ray Leonard was a phenomenal fighter. I believe he's probably the best fighter ever."

As a professional, Moore was well known for his enormous heart and leaving it all in the ring. In 2005, he faced Michael Jones in a trilogy fight. Moore was knocked down twice in the third round and was, it appeared in the moment, nearly finished. Yet he rallied back to stop Jones in a thrilling finish in the 6th round. Later, in perhaps his most famous match, Moore fought Matthew Macklin in 2006 for the British super welterweight title. Over the course of the Fight of the Year bout, both men put forth spectacular, gutsy performances. Again Moore was able to stop his foe, this time in the 10th round.

But on top of his warrior spirit on display in the ring, Moore also had underrated defensive skills, which helped him win these tough bouts he admits he may not have won otherwise. Jamie gave some insight into how his defense developed.

"One of my big heroes was Nigel Benn," Moore said. "And Nigel wasn't really known for his defensive maneuvers. So early on in me career, that was what let me down. I lost to Scott Dixon (a fight Moore was winning, in July 2001). And basically the reason I lost was because I didn't really look after meself on the ropes and look after meself on the back foot. So I sort of took it upon meself to master the art of feeling comfortable in the most uncomfortable positions. So, inspired by that, I used to put meself in situations where I felt uncomfortable, to make sure that when I was in those situations in the ring I could look after meself.

"It wasn't the strongest part of my game, I didn't feel, but it then allowed me in the future to win fights where I probably would've lost if I'd never put meself in those positions. So the third Michael Jones fight, where I got put down twice and I was in a hell of a lot of trouble, I probably would've lost that fight if it wasn't for the experience of losing the Scott Dixon fight. And the Matthew Macklin fight, I never would've won because I would've probably met him head on and had a fight with him, but I boxed him on my back foot and allowed him to make mistakes and then made him pay for them. Those experiences from losing me first professional fight allowed me to win those fights."

Many fighters are taking advantage of today's better technology and medical research to try to extend the longevity of their careers and, more importantly, maintain their health after boxing. As a trainer, Moore has gone on the record to state he believes in limiting the amount of sparring his fighters are doing once they reach a certain point in their careers. Based on his personal experience, it's understandable why he's so passionate about the subject.

"Well, the sparring thing—it's a big one for me because I retired because I had a change in my brain scan. It wasn't a change which said I couldn't box anymore. But it just worried me because it's a dangerous sport, and the reason I retired was because I didn't want to take any risks. I sparred hard, but I didn't spar a lot of rounds so it was good in that sense. I used to limit the rounds—I used to keep it to six or eight. Once you've got the experience, you can navigate twelve rounds properly after you've done, say, six rounds sparring. Then the rest of your fitness and conditioning can be done elsewhere.

"So I don't let my fighters spar any more than eight rounds, tops. The majority of the time they'll only ever spar six rounds. Unless they're up-and-coming fighters, and they're learning how to pace themselves and navigate twelve rounds, then obviously I'll get them to do it a couple of times. But even then, I won't ask them to do it a lot. I mean, in a training camp for a young fighter coming through, I would only ever ask them to do one twelve-round spar. Ten rounds is near enough to twelve rounds, so the conditioning part, to get you through those championship rounds, is more important. Because once you can get yourself through ten rounds, as long as you're fit and you can recover, you can get yourself through twelve."

One aspect of modern boxing training, which some coaches are split on, is the use of pads. Some trainers feel that pad work has become too prevalent in preparation, that it's being over-used. When asked about his thoughts on pad work, Moore said, "I'm a big believer in pad work for the rhythm, for timing, for sharpness, to improve your defense. I'll put gloves on sometimes and make a fighter defend themselves. I won't go full out, but a big part of being a good defensive fighter is having good anticipation. You know, reading your opponent's body movements, and anticipating the shots they're gonna throw. Because it's so difficult to react and get your head out of the way in time when the shots are coming so fast. You have to have a good judgment of timing, good judgment of distance, and anticipate the shots. So I think pad work comes into that massively.

"And tactically, I like to assess the fighter they're gonna be up against. On pads you can mimic [the opponent's] style, their rhythm, and that's a good way of getting [my fighter] used to what sort of shots are gonna pay off in the fight they have coming up."

Moore summed up the approach he takes in the camp leading up to a specific bout. "I generally set out three or four things which I believe will work in a fight, and then we'll drill that over and over again a couple of times a week in the build up to the fight, for say eight weeks. So by the time the fight comes around, the stuff that will work against the opponent, it's really second nature. They don't even have to think about it by the time the fight comes."

When watching tape on his fighter's opponent, Moore discussed specifically what it is he's looking for. "I like to look for the fighter's rhythm. In general I like to look at the things they're good at, but then I also think when they're in a situation where they've been hurt, or when they're on the back foot—what are their natural instincts? What do they do which comes natural? Because that's definitely something that's gonna happen if my guy gets them in trouble. So I'll always try and pick something out, and I'll warn [my fighter] about if they put that fighter in a situation where their back's to the rope, or they're in trouble, this is what could happen. Just to make sure they're aware so they don't neglect defense and stuff like that.

"I'm a big believer in if you can read a fighter's body language and rhythm, and you can anticipate the types of shots they're gonna throw, you're always gonna be one step ahead."

There is a debate in some circles as to whether a successful trainer needs to have been a boxer himself. Said Moore, "I don't think it's essential, but ideally, I think it's good to have experience going through a tough fight, knowing what it takes to physically go through it. And obviously to have experienced different situations because then you're better equipped to give advice on getting through those situations. You've got exceptions to the rule—people like Angelo Dundee—but I think in general, if you're gonna ask your fighter to do something, I definitely think it's better that you've been through it yourself to know what you're asking them to do."

Another aspect of training that often seems split is the notion of the value of a fighter's mental state. Most coaches agree that it's important, but some stress the critical nature of a boxer's psychology as much if not more than physical boxing skills.

Like many of the sport's greatest trainers, Jamie strongly believes that a fighter's mental state plays a vital role in his performance in the ring. "I think psychologically—that's a massive thing, and I'm a big believer in giving a fighter confidence. Because a confident fighter is so much harder to beat than somebody who's having doubts.

"I'm definitely a glass half full person, so I don't really allow myself to think negative thoughts. And I believe that was bred into me as a fighter over the years. I used to have [negative

thoughts] as a young lad, 15, 16, 17 years old. And gradually as I got more experienced, I learned to block that out. So I do try to teach my fighters not to think negatively.

“If, for instance, we’re in the changing room before a fight and I can see by the look on the fighter’s face that they’re starting to sort of let the mind drift and have negative thoughts, I’ll bring them out and I’ll start speaking positively about the fight, and going through the tactics, and just basically stopping that thought process. And that does the job itself. That stops them from having negative thoughts, and then allows them to focus on the job they’ve got to do.”

In the corner on fight night, Moore gave some insight into what types of instruction he focuses on the most, as well as how he gives them. “Generally what I tend to do is give him ten to fifteen seconds just to recover. Because I believe the first part of the minute when they come back to the corner, they’re just trying to get their breath back and trying to recover from the round, and they don’t take any instruction or information in. So the first part is just for them to get their breath back, give ‘em a little drink, and then I generally try to pick two or three things from the round where they can improve on or something they need to be careful of or watch out for. I think if you speak continuously or overload information, it’s pointless. My big philosophy in the corner is don’t overload, because they won’t take it on board.”

As a fighter, Jamie was trained by Oliver Harrison. Moore talked about how they got their start together in the professional ranks, and the fact that Harrison is the only trainer he really looks to for inspiration in his field.

“You know, my trainer Oliver Harrison—he wasn’t even training any professionals when I started with him. He said to me, ‘Give me the opportunity and I believe I could do a good job with you.’ I’m a big believer in giving people the opportunity. I had a lot of experience working with him, and I knew that he knew what he was talking about. And he proved right, he did a great job with me, he’s carried on to do a great job with the fighters he’s worked with since. I very much took on a lot of the stuff he taught me as a fighter, and I put that in to practice as a trainer. He’s definitely one I look up to.

“I don’t really look up to any trainers if I’m being honest with you, other than that. Because Oliver was the one I worked with the majority of my career. I like to do my own thing. I don’t think there’s a set way to train any fighter. I’m a believer in you’re as good as your fighters. I can tell a fighter till I’m blue in the face what I think he should do, but if he’s not able to carry that through, then there’s nothing more I can do. I can make a fighter better, definitely, but I think you’re only as good as your fighter. And I’m lucky, I’m privileged, to be able to work with good fighters. And if they’re enjoying working with me, and I’m gonna be able to get the best out of them because of that, then I think it’s a winning formula.”

One of Jamie Moore’s nicknames as a boxer was “The Fighter’s Fighter.” That sums up how his legacy is viewed by fans and people in the industry. But now, as a trainer, that moniker is still fitting. Moore stands with his fighters and is happy to fight for them, giving his own time and energy to help make their careers and lives better.

“I’m definitely a bit of a people person,” Jamie said. “I like to do good things for people. If you do one good deed a day, it just makes your day that much better. So with boxing being my sport, what better way for me than to be able to coach people and try and help them improve their boxing and make their career better? I get no better feeling whatsoever than helping a fighter go through a training camp, and enjoy himself doing it, even though it’s so tough—and then getting his hand raised at the end of the fight. There’s no better feeling than that.”

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