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Former Aspiring Boxer Visits Finger Lakes To Discuss Concussion Awareness



CANANDAIGUA, NY. – Envision waking up one morning -- you open your eyes like you normally would, they seem a bit blurry, which to some is a usual occurrence -- but as the day goes on, the fog that has lifted every single day to clear your vision has decided to stick around -- permanently. Visualize going through each day with a constant flow of headaches. Better yet, imagine not being able to remember the finer things in life -- the memories that have built you to become who you are -- or just picture not being able to recall any occurrences that you may have endured in your life. Think -- how would you live your life if your thoughts and movements are controlled by something that you could have avoided if you simply would have listened to the most important thing that controls your everyday decisions -- your brain? This is a question that former aspiring middleweight boxer, Geneva, NY native, Ray Ciancaglini, asks himself frequently to this day.

Living with the symptoms of blurred vision, constant headaches, and memory loss, Ciancaglini battles what is a hard fight -- a fight that is harder than any bout he had ever fought in the boxing ring during his days as a young, talented fighter. Four decades ago, the boxer's life changed forever in the third round of a middleweight fight at the Buffalo Memorial Auditorium in Buffalo, NY. Ciancaglini was fighting his opponent on what seemed to be another usual day in a pair of gloves for him. Well, a fight that seemed so harmless -- turned out to be the most harmful one that he had ever experienced during his boxing career.

In that third round, Ciancaglini caught what would be the most crucial right hook of his career directly to the back of his head. Now, it was a blow, but it was no knockout punch -- leaving no one including himself to believing that it was a treacherous hit to the cranium. After the hook was delivered, Ciancaglini's vision became blurred and his hearing became impaired. He felt dazed. What to do next? Ciancaglini decided to keep fighting without any knowledge on what his symptoms meant. He ignored the warning signs that were dropped right in front of him by ignoring them to their fullest.

After the fight concluded, Ciancaglini, a week later, reentered the ring to fight another opponent. Continuing his pursuits in the ring became what he calls now -- "a foolish mistake."

Ignoring the symptoms that had set in during that Buffalo, NY showdown was a grand mistake that Ciancaglini wishes he didn't make. What the boxer didn't know was that he had suffered a second impact injury during that bout -- which occurs after an individual sustains a concussion on top of an unhealed concussion.

Living a life where all Ciancaglini knew best was to keep fighting each day in order to reach his goal of becoming the best at his former profession was what kept him self-motivated. A durable athlete during his boxing career, he never once hit the floor as a result of a knockdown or knockout.

What little did he know that what seemed like an innocent right hook to the head, would serve as a great sense of false infallibility? That is exactly what it did -- leaving him less than a half century later in a constant battle everyday -- dealing with the side effects from several untreated concussions. The effects of these concussions began to be felt in great magnitude after Ciancaglini's boxing career concluded.

After boxing became extinct in his early adult life, Ciancaglini knew he had to make a living somehow -- so he found work at Eastman Kodak in Rochester, NY. It was there where he and his co-workers began realizing that his health was playing a major role in his everyday abilities to perform his job. The memory loss that set in after that third round hit to the head continued to worsen. Ciancaglini started to forget his daily job duties at Kodak and along the way he also began to develop hand tremors -- a new symptom to add to the bucket list of other symptoms that he continues to live with on an everyday basis. Needless to say -- with the list of symptoms growing, Ciancaglini decided that it was time to meet with a specialist to discuss his situation.

Shortly after his visit with a specialist, Ciancaglini received unflattering news -- he was suffering from Dementia Pugilistica -- a form of second-impact injury, which settled in after avoiding seeking treatment for untreated concussions.

After that lonely meeting with the specialist, the extent of what had occurred and what was going to occur throughout the rest of his life began to settle in. His tremors and memory loss would only continue to worsen as time went on. Not being able to focus at work, it was time for him to give up his 14-year career at Kodak.

After turning in his career at Kodak, Ciancaglini began focusing on the next stage of his life. He knew he had to do something, especially considering that he had always been a go-getter previous to his retirement from Kodak. Knowing his situation and knowing the magnitude of how a contact sport like boxing affected him in a negative way, Ciancaglini decided to become an avid speaker about second-impact injuries. He now travels around the state of New York speaking at colleges and universities (etc.) about the ramifications of second-impact injuries and how they can impact your life in a negative light.

Finger Lakes Community College has been just one of several landing spots where Ciancaglini has told his story. Last month, he visited the Canandaigua campus, telling his story to a cast of people (students, athletes, faculty, staff, and the public) about what he went through and still goes through to this day. Ciancaglini pointed out to the crowd the importance of reporting any symptoms that you have suffered or are suffering from as a result of a sport related incident (specifically head injuries). He can attest that he wishes he would have addressed the symptoms that he had developed rather than ignoring them.

Ciancaglini preached to the crowd the importance of listening to your mind and body. He ended his close to an hour speech by telling them the significance of the three R's -- report, rest, and rehabilitate. He urged anyone who has suffered or is suffering from the symptoms that have clouded his life to report them immediately. Ciancaglini then made it a point to state the value of resting and rehabilitating any injury that you have or could sustain. Proper rest is extremely important as it allows the body time to heal. Rehabbing an injury is also extremely meaningful as it nurtures the body by strengthening the area where it occurred.

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