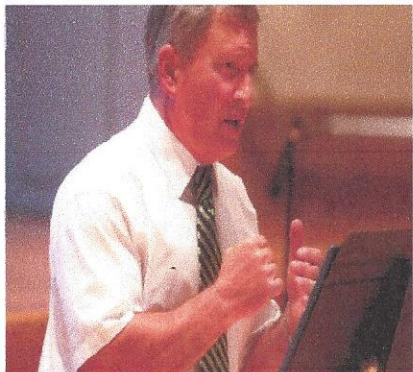


Former boxer warns Bona athletes about concussions

By [Caitlin McClare](#)

It started with a right hook at age 16. It furthered with a punch one week later. It continues with daily headaches, shaking and memory lapses.



With that story, former middleweight boxer Ray Ciancaglini educated St. Bonaventure athletes on the importance of concussion treatment and how to prevent Second Impact Syndrome.

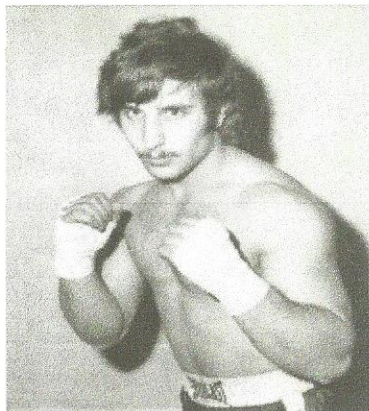
Speaking in the Dresser Auditorium in the John J. Murphy Professional Building, Ciancaglini said not seeking medical attention after a concussion is “not honorable or courageous. It [is] a self-destructive act.”

In his fighting days, it was believed that one had to be knocked unconscious to retain a concussion. Ciancaglini claims he was never knocked down. Not in the ring, anyway.

At a fight in Buffalo, his opponent momentarily impaired his hearing with a right hook. The fatigue and headaches continued for days, but he convinced himself that it was normal to be tired after a well-fought competition.

“Little did I know that first concussion was only the beginning of my troubles,” he said.

One week later at a fight in Syracuse, he received another blow to the head. From that punch, he felt persistent fatigue, accompanied by a lingering headache. The physical repercussions were only half of it; he dropped from high honor roll to failing, and developed behavioral problems. He learned the hard way that the Second Impact Syndrome is very real and very dangerous.



After being diagnosed with dementia pugilistica, Ciancaglini dedicated his life to proving “the game you sit out today could be the career you save tomorrow.” Aside from speaking at high schools and colleges around the country, he helped get the Concussion Management Awareness Act passed in New York State in 2011. The law requires that certain measures be taken after a student or player experiences a concussion. The act stipulates that the student must do what his or her medical professional suggests, so he or she can recover fully.

The heart of an athlete sometimes speaks louder than the pain. However, when it comes to concussions, athletes must listen. Ciancaglini claims he has battled headaches every day for 50 years, since that right hook in Buffalo. “I could have avoided my condition,” he said.

St. Bonaventure athletic trainer Chris Hobler said athletes 25 and younger are the first generation to receive concussion education. Precautionary steps have been taken in many sports, including football and boxing. As for youth boxing, head gear is utilized and rounds have been shortened. Many programs require physicians beside the ring to react quickly to potential concussions.

Toward the end of Ciancaglini’s career, many questioned if his heart was still in the sport. As it turned out, his heart was always in it — maybe a little too much.