

# THE EVENING The Tribune

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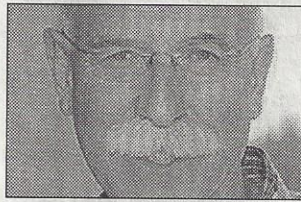
## RIP ... The Greatest

**R**ay Ciancaglini is a retired boxer who works tirelessly to ensure that youthful football and soccer players don't suffer the same debilitating Parkinson's Syndrome that he faces and Muhammad Ali faced every minute. These are his words:

"The world is saddened by the news of Muhammad Ali's passing. Ali was truly the greatest boxing and sports figure of all time. I had tremendous respect for his courage and convictions both inside and outside a boxing ring.

"I have never had the honor of meeting him. My only connection would be that we are both suspended by the New York State boxing commission in the same era: Ali for his refusal to be inducted into the United States Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and mine because of abnormal results for a mandatory EEG Brain Wave Test.

"We both circumvented our suspensions by going South (in 1970 Ali defeated Jerry Quarry in Georgia) to states that had no boxing commission or less stringent regulations. Curt Chaplin, formerly an ABC News sports reporter, gave me an autographed photo of Ali knowing that I, too, was suffering from



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Parkinson's Syndrome. I was very humbled by that kind gesture.

"Muhammad's passing inspires me even more to continue with my second impact message as I am still recovering from a debilitating car accident but will be back on the lecturing circuit in July with appearances slated in Burlington, Vt., and New England University in Portland, Maine. "Requiescat In Pace, the Greatest!"

Ray was a promising regional middleweight before repeated head blows scrambled his brain and ended his career at age 23.

He now fights in another ring: teaching student athletes, coaches, school officials and parents how to prevent sports-related brain injuries before the concussions shorten other lives and careers.

A-E met him at Jasper-Troupsburg in 2013 when Ray told 200 teenagers and parents about the dangers of multiple concussions.

His blunt remarks were spell-binding: Nobody

whispered, not a single cough or snuffle interrupted the description of unwise post-concussion decisions that cost him a normal life.

His mantra: "Leave no doubt, sit it out." If you have the symptoms of a head injury, don't reenter the fray: "Make the smart choice. Get a medical opinion," he said more than once that night.

Ray focused on second-impact syndrome (SIS), the dangerous results of second concussions that hit developing young brains still healing from previous injuries. SIS causes brain swelling and bleeding that can cause death or permanent disability. "If you hurt your brain, everything's affected," he counseled.

Ray's simple recommendation for avoiding SIS: Remove concussed athletes from practice or play until symptoms disappear and health care professionals clear them to play.

After his first concussion, Ray admitted he walked in a haze of headaches. Some advisors accused him of sloth: "Get out there and fight," one counseled. He self-medicated with hundreds of vitamin B tablets and aspirin.

One week after the now-obvious fight concussion,

Ray got out there, fought and lost his career and a normal life.

Thanks to volunteers and a loving wife, he adapts and takes medications four times daily. "I'm okay just long enough to make a speech." But on his way home, what medicos call Dementia Pugilistica and Parkinson's Syndrome start shaking his body reminiscent of television videos of Mohammad Ali. He struggles to get three hours of sleep nightly.

Forty years after Ray lost his normal life, medical professionals know how to prevent those problems. Many area schools follow protocols similar to Jasper-Troupsburg to prevent SIS. Jasper-Troupsburg athletes, for example, take baseline tests in seventh and tenth grades, Athletic Director Jean M. Green said.

Ray also helped promote the state concussion-management act that made mandatory in 2012 the protocol Jasper-Troupsburg has followed for years.

How willing to help fight concussions is Ray? He speaks gratis, as long as the presentation prompts news coverage for his anti-SIS message.

— Al Bruce is the Evening Tribune education reporter.