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Hesburgh Library Research Award: History of Women's Boxing at Notre Dame

Notre Dame has an extensive boxing history; a predecessor to the Men's Boxing Club—also known as Bengal Bouts—was established in 1920 by legendary football coach Knute Rockne. As two students who grew up watching and participating in other sports, we both joined the Women's Boxing Club during our first year and developed a passion for the sport, ultimately becoming captains. Because of our love for sports at large, we decided to take the interdisciplinary American Studies course Sport & Big Data, taught by Professor Katherine Walden. From the beginning, Prof. Walden encouraged us to choose a final project related to our passions and to use all resources available at our disposal. Naturally, we looked to Baraka Bouts: a club that has existed for over two decades, but has very little written history to show for it. Motivated both by the love of the sport, the supportive community of the club, and an understanding that sports and culture are deeply intertwined, we decided to create an interactive timeline on the history of women's boxing at Notre Dame. To chase down the club's history, we conducted seven interviews with boxers, captains, and current coaches and utilized many resources from the Hesburgh Library.

Because we knew that the Hesburgh Library has a comprehensive collection of boxing-related materials, we decided to first visit the Archives. After expressing our interest, Prof. Walden connected us to Sports Archivist Dr. Greg Bond. We wanted to waste no time setting the context for what the University already archived from Baraka Bouts, which ended up being some news articles, score cards, four programs, a few marketing materials, and a digital collection of less than 100 photos. Our first visit to the archives was on April 25th, where we met

with Sports Archivist Dr. Gregory Bond. Dr. Bond walked us through the process of submitting archives requests, opened the door to submitting materials to the archives, and acted as a wonderful director for all of our questions throughout this project. With Dr. Bond's guidance, we submitted a form to pull archival materials.

On May 3rd, Joe Smith guided us through a materials visit and gave us procedures for approving our chosen materials to include in our timeline. After we visited the archives reading room and selected our documents, he graciously passed the information to Elizabeth Hogan, who digitized these materials. We ultimately included several pictures from the Archives that we discovered from this visit, including pictures taken at practice in the inaugural year of Women's Boxing, pictures of the first official Baraka Bouts program, pictures of initial articles about the club's founding, and more. Although the club is relatively new, the Archives had images that were extremely valuable for our project and ones that we would not have discovered without the help of the Hesburgh Library staff.

Throughout this project, we spent a significant amount of time piecing together our materials and researching in the Collaboration Hubs throughout the library and the monitors on the second floor of Hesburgh. We became especially adept at using the ND Archives website, searching the keywords "boxing," "women's boxing," and "Baraka Bouts" on OneSearch, the ND Catalog, and print archives. Some of our best stories, quotes, and names of captains that we reached out to interview were found through digging through digital reserves of the Scholastic and the Observer, housed in the online archives.

After we had compiled content for our project, we next decided on the medium of a deliverable. We decided to explore the Remix website, since the content of our project could take multiple forms. On this site, we found documentation for TimelineJS, the interactive timeline

hosted through CDN Knightlab. We were able to follow along on the robust set of checklist instructions on the Remix website to build the timeline. Because we sought to tell a chronological story with our project, the timeline was a very suitable deliverable format, and with the help of the Hesburgh Library resources on the Remix site, troubleshooting issues was far easier.

This project helped us to more fully understand the importance of the preservation of club materials to gain a more accurate understanding of student life at Notre Dame. Because of this, we are currently in the process of helping expand the contents of these archival materials that we found so valuable. We hope to increase the scope of materials on Baraka Bouts and make permanent historical growth with our project. Before graduation, we have a meeting scheduled with Dr. Bond to propose some Baraka Bouts marketing materials and hard drives of previous bouts to submit to the Archives.

While this project is something that we are very passionate about, it also encompasses commentary about the perceptions of women on campus and women's participation in combat sports. When founder Aimee (Catrow) Buccellato first began practicing with the men's club before the women's club was established, members of RecSports told her that she could not practice with boxing gloves in case alumni saw a woman boxing and training with the men. As late as 2010, an article was published in The Observer with the title "Baraka Bouts: Ladies by Day, Boxers by Night," as if womanhood and combat sports must be diametrically opposed. Observer Editorials, however, often noted the importance of allowing the women to host their own public bouts. We recognize that all historical accounts are part of a larger narrative relating to power, theories of gender, and cultural understandings of sports.

This project made us much more comfortable navigating new spaces in the library, to the point where one of us also utilized an interlibrary loan for research in another class. We appreciate that many of the resources of the Hesburgh Library are right at our fingertips as undergraduates. The archivists were incredibly helpful; their knowledge, support, and excitement for our project proved to us that scholarship can take many different forms, exist over several platforms, and can be far more wide-reaching than it may seem at first glance. This puzzle is ongoing, but we were excited to piece it together further with the help of these resources. We would like to thank everyone at the Hesburgh Library for developing the resources we used and walking alongside us in the development of our project!