

Boxers find sport challenging

By MIKE SCANLON

In skydiving, which attracts a lot of them, they're called "Whifos," as in "What for you jump out of planes?"

Be assured that boxing draws very nearly as many Whifos, as in "What for you get hit in the head?"

The young fighters in the Livonia Boxing Club seem to all have similar reasons for getting in the ring.

"I tell everybody the main thing is, it's one-on-one. There's nobody to blame but yourself," said Steve Darnell, adding, "It's not so violent. It's like an art, self-defense. You got to figure what's he going to do and what you're going to do."

Darnell, 17, is a left-handed welterweight with an 8-1 amateur record. And a worried mother.

"My dad likes it. My mother, she hasn't been to any of my fights. She doesn't really object to it, but she doesn't want to see me get hurt," explained Darnell.

"Hockey's a team sport, but in boxing, you got to do it for yourself. You got to have more heart, I guess, in boxing," said Ken Morris, a 17-year-old lightweight who plays hockey for Churchill High School.

Other advantages offered by boxing, Morris says, are that "it gets my aggressions out so I don't go home and beat up my brother, it keeps me busy and it keeps me in shape."

MORRIS FIGURES he trains 13 hours a week, but he doesn't take boxing especially seriously. "I don't want to go pro. It's just fun for the time being — after a while, it kind of gets to your brain cells," adds Morris, who sports a 7-3 record.

"It's just you and someone else. Who's ever best," said Steve Darnell, 17.

His brother, Brad, 21, who finished second two consecutive years for the state Golden Gloves middleweight title — including a controversial decision last year — plans to make one more stab at the Gloves title this year and then turn pro. His

amateur record is 18-8.

"You're training for yourself. You're not training for nine or 10 other guys, so you train harder," said Lally.

Lally's mother is no more enthusiastic than Darnell's.

"My dad loves it. My mom loves it, she just can't watch it," Lally said. "She went to see one fight in the Gold Gloves finals a couple years ago and she walked out in the first round."

"Every guy I fight, she thinks it's Sonny Liston."

Craig Payne, who at 19 is a latecomer to amateur boxing, was a high school fullback.

"You got to be in better condition (to box). When I was running fullback, if I got tired, I just went to the sides. In this, you get tired, you get whipped," said Payne, a heavyweight with a 3-1 record and a similarly squeamish mother.

"She thinks I'm crazy," said Payne. "She thinks she taught me better."

PAYNE, WHO also plans a professional career, thinks boxing is "one of the main things in life, besides women."

"You see all the hard work you have to put into this, all the sweat and blood, but you get to the end of the road and payday is nice," he said. Payne is scheduled to fight eight times in the next month.



Craig Payne, a promising heavyweight boxer, takes a breather before resuming a workout on the heavy bag.

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