

Knowledge Throw-Down – An Interview with Boxing Fitness Expert: Rob Pilger

By John Izzo



I've known of Rob Pilger for a few years. We met "virtually" through our old days on [the now defunct] SportSpecific.com discussion board. When I think of Rob Pilger, I think of a sponge. I'm not kidding. This guy SOAKS up information from top sources...and I mean TOP sources: Paul Check, Mike Boyle, Tom Purvis, Louie Simmons....top shelf experts. Heck, Rob is even featured in Coach Boyle's Strength Coach DVD set. However, I think the thing that makes Rob stand out to me is his passion for boxing and how he has really bridged the gap between boxing and strength/conditioning. Rob is no joke. He can definitely throw down and he also got the wisdom to back it up. So, after checking out his blog (robpilger.com), I had to get his insights for my readers. And you won't be disappointed.

JOHN: Rob, how did you get started with boxing? And at what point did you bridge the relationship between boxing and overall general fitness conditioning?

ROB: "I got started in boxing when I was a freshman in high school. I played football in my freshman year and after not playing like I should due to me not having the typical 'kiss-ass' last name; I met a friend who boxed and I never looked back.

My friend Charlie's father owned a boxing gym and I started boxing with them which lasted 5 years until the program they ran died down. Then I trained out of Wauseion, Ohio for 4 years until I found the holy land of boxing in NY.

I trained in Syracuse, NY for 4 years and the skill training was awesome. I never learned so much about boxing/skill training as I did in Syracuse. The weak link, however, was the lack of strength/conditioning. I had a brief pro-career and I got out of it because my then trainer was totally against strength training. *I used to have to sneak to Bally's to lift weights.* At that time I was studying to become a CHEK Level I Practitioner, and I was applying what I was learning through those correspondence courses to my own training.

There is a bad disease in boxing that strength training makes you slow. After leaving Syracuse, NY I moved to Jacksonville, Florida and started **to bridge the gap of old school boxing skill with 21st century sports science.** I was successful down there working out of a great gym in St. Augustine, Florida studying with the best along the way while also becoming a CHEK Level II Practitioner. I attended conferences like the S.W.I.S. and the Perform Better, and the seminars I did with the likes of Mike Boyle, Joe Defranco, Dr. Eric Serrano, etc along with top notch correspondence courses like the

RTS course by Tom Purvis; gave me a tremendous backbone and confidence to open my own fight school in Columbus, Ohio---where I'm at now.

I've been a trainer at three National tournaments, and I coach as several state tourneys every year. My many years in competing as a fighter have allowed me to master old school boxing techniques [typically] brushed over now a days, and my continuing education in sports science allows me to be a force and a solution for this disease.

I enjoy being literally 10 minutes from Westside Barbell where the often misunderstood Louie Simmons trains the stronger lifters in the world. I've learned a lot of ways to use body weight movements, sleds, etc to better train my fighters.

I'm having a blast and developing some good young talent as well."

JOHN: Rob, you have really been coming up in the fitness industry. You have spent a great deal of time in the trenches; however, you seem to enjoy teaching boxing and fitness to people. Why after all these years why haven't you burnt out? Is there a secret to your longevity? What types of things can other fitness professional implement in their lives and careers to ensure that they can succeed?

ROB: "I REALLY enjoy what I do and I know my purpose in life. Paul Chek calls it being in your river. All the work you do is fascinating and fun. Don't get me wrong it can be tough at times taking on too much, but by "sharpening the saw"---taking more courses, attending quality seminars, reading quality books, and networking with REAL trainers/coaches allows you to stay fresh, inspired, sharp, and keep delivering results along the way. **We all love the feeling we get from helping people reach their goals. That's a hard feeling to get sick of if you stay sharp and keep delivering.** It's the best drug on the planet. Also, for me, developing fighters is an awesome experience. I know I'll be doing this in my eighties and probably nineties. There's NO retirement for me. I'm in it for life because I know my purpose, I'm good at what I do, and I love the feeling I get from doing it. Life is meant to be enjoyed isn't it?"

JOHN: What is the most common injury you typically see in your boxers? And are the injures different between your professional/amateur boxers compared to your general population clients that take up boxing? What are the differences you see?

ROB: "I would say shoulder and hand. In the pros, more shoulder injuries even back from too many crunches and sit ups over the years on an already imbalanced (pronated) shoulder joint.

In the amateurs, hand injuries. Lots of this comes from sloppy techniques. I really don't see many injuries with my amateur fighters because we practice solid technique.

I would say the general population clients suffer from hand, knee, and shoulder because they are severely imbalanced from being weak, sedentary, along with poor ergonomics."

JOHN: It seems that the best coaches and trainers today, try to integrate their clients/athletes in different types of activities. It is not straight up weight-lifting anymore.

Boxing, cycling, rowing, parkour, and others activities are being introduced into programs. Why is it important to integrate clients and athletes in different skills?

ROB: "So they are well rounded and just don't adapt to the same old conditioning methods. You make them better athletes by conditioning them with these different cross-sports, and the conditioning is

much better with them added, as they are using different movements and conditioning intervals. They are also training different bio motor abilities with cross training.

Fighters will work harder with variety, as the same old same old gets lame and boring.”

JOHN: As a fitness professional, who do you admire and derive a lot of influence from?

ROB: “**Paul Chek** has been a big influence to me early in my career and still now. He taught me to have lots of integrity, professionalism, passion, belief in yourself-skills, and the trait to keep learning, ‘sharpening the saw’ to be the best you possible can.



I have benefited greatly from his multi disciplinary courses and internships. They put me at the top of the heap of the best fitness, strength/conditioning trainers there are today.

I have recently been spending time with Louie Simmons. I train at Westside doing my own training, but I also watch him coach and work with different athletes. **Louie is a VERY misunderstood and stereotyped coach.** I now see why people say he is 30 years ahead of many coaches today. **He is a very intuitive coach.** He's also the 'most giving' coach I've ever been around...meaning he gives his time, money, favors etc. I'm constantly amazed as he gives **without expecting** anything back in return. Many people give so they create a bond to be given back only.



I also wanted to add that Louie's methods have made me the strongest I've ever been as I lift raw and drug free. His unorthodox conditioning methods have me in the best shape I've been. I've always been in good shape but he 'ups the ante' big time.

His generosity, integrity, coaching style, attitude to create the best there is, and ability to think and coach out side the box while telling it like it is rubs off on me.

My gym is ten minutes from Westside and it's an awesome environment... Something to witness for sure. So having an ideal training environment and the importance of it is something I learned from him as well.

I must add that Tom Purvis has been a good influence, as well as my buddy Alwyn Cosgrove, in more ways than one. My business has only improved by listening to Alwyn's ideas and insight.

JOHN: Thanks for the insights Rob.

ROB: "No problem, John."

About Rob: Rob was a competitive Amateur boxer winning three golden glove championships. He has been involved in boxing, as a fighter, then trainer for 16 years. His Amateur training experience consists of being assistant trainer at three national golden glove tournaments and many other state tournaments, and fight shows. Rob has been a strength/conditioning consultant to top national champion fighters. Rob also works with professional fighters as a skill and strength/conditioning coach.

He has interned with, studied, and taken seminars with some of the biggest names in strength/conditioning. Rob is a CHEK Level II Practitioner, Level II USA Boxing Coach, and Licensed Pro Boxing Trainer.

His site <http://www.boxingperformance.com> is the only membership site in the world that bridges old school boxing skill with 21st century sports science. You can also read more of Rob's work on his blog <http://www.RobPilger.com>

He has also created two boxing dvds that have been selling world wide. The ultimate boxing workout Vol. I and Vol. II at <http://www.theultimateboxingworkout.com>