



The Chicago International Film Festival

STUDY GUIDE – RINGSIDE
Director: André Hörmann
93 minutes, in English



Synopsis: *Ringside* looks at the dangerous, volatile world of Chicago's South Side from the perspective of two remarkably gifted young boxers and the fathers who train them ; as one begins a rising career in the ring, the other serves an eight-year-prison sentence for criminal trespass and burglary.

Ringside is interested in these two families as well as the communities they live in, the people they rely on, and Chicago itself. We're allowed to watch lives existing in parallel to each other without being forced to judge them. Director André Hörmann has made over twenty feature and short films, many of which are focused on competitive athletes trying to break through.

Fast Facts:

- The earliest evidence of boxing exists in Sumerian artworks dated all the way back to 3rd millennium BC, which depicted bare-knuckle boxing. The sport has consistently evolved since then, from the version inducted into Greek Olympics in 688BC, to the Marquess of Queensbury Rules introduced in 1863 Great Britain, which forms the backbone of modern

boxing.

- Boxing has a rich history in Chicago. Most notably, the city's Golden Glove amateur championships was the first of its kind in the U.S., held from 1923-1926 and was officially inaugurated by The Chicago Tribune in 1928. Famous Golden Glove winners include Joe Louis, Muhammad Ali, Montell Williams, and Nate Jones.
- There are over 60 individual boxing studios across Chicago. Several of these facilities are exclusively for youth boxing, while others advertise their availability to all members of the family.
- Director André Hörmann made a short documentary film about Kenneth and Kenneth Sr. called *Father's Prayer* in 2010.

Discussion Questions:

1. When we meet Kenneth and Destyne after the prologue sequence, they're already in very different places. Were you surprised by how their lives progressed? How did your impression of them change as the film went on?
2. Kenneth Sr. and Destyne Sr. talk about having to be father and coach for their sons, sometimes making a point of when they need to be one or the other. They also talk about making sure their sons do not repeat the mistakes they made as young men. How did your impressions of them change, as fathers and as coaches? Once Destyne returns to boxing, his father is no longer his coach. Did you notice a difference in their dynamic as a family?
3. Kenneth Jr. talks about how he would've quit boxing when he was young if his dad hadn't stopped him, and now that he's good he doesn't want to quit. Have your parents pushed you towards a career or activity you didn't want to do? How did you respond?
4. Did you get a sense of Kenneth and Destyne's lives outside of their relationships to boxing? How about Kenneth Sr. and Destyne Sr.?
5. Were you surprised that Destyne Jr.'s time in boot camp ended the way it did? How did you react when you learned what happened?
6. At one point Destyne talks about how he could've had Kenneth's life if things had gone differently. Do you agree with Destyne? Do you think what happened to him was fair?
7. At two moments - before Kenneth's fight at the Olympic trials, and after he has been signed for a national contract - he is told the fact that he fought is what matters, even more than whether he wins or loses. Do you agree? Does the film uphold this idea?
8. When Kenneth and Destyne are training, we see some people appear consistently over the years and some only for a few moments. Did you get a sense of the boxing community outside of the people *Ringside* is about?
9. For the most part, *Ringside* is shot and edited in a naturalistic style. What was significant about the moments where it went against this style? Did these flourishes teach you something about the characters, or did they seem unnecessary?

10. *Ringside* quickly sets up Kenneth, Destyne, and their fathers as parallel figures. It also looks at the goals that Kenneth Sr. and Destyne Sr. have for their sons. What similarities and differences did you notice between all four men, beyond their successes and failures?
11. André Hörmann made a hard-to-find short documentary film in 2010 called *Father's Prayer* exclusively about Kenneth Jr. and Sr., presumably focusing on them training for the 2012 Olympics. Would *Ringside* have been different if we only got to see one of these stories? Going in the opposite direction, would the film have been different if we got to see more boxers?
12. The film ends on an ultimately triumphant note for Kenneth and for Destyne, though neither of them is where they expected to be when the film starts. Do you think they've both ended up in good places?
13. Despite their setbacks, Kenneth and Destyne remain committed to boxing. Were you surprised by their dedication? Is there anything you're devoted to the way they are to boxing?

Useful links and resources :

Ringside website: <https://www.ringsidethefilm.com/>

A brief history of boxing in Chicago: <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/159.html>

Chicago Sun-Times article on boxer Joshua Greer Jr., who was consistently in and out of jail as a teenager and has since become an award winning up-and-coming boxer in his early 20's:
<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2019/2/14/18385552/up-and-coming-chicago-boxer-joshua-greer-jr-hasn-t-lost-track-of-roots>

Chicago Tribune article about a Little Village youth boxing studio with similar ideals as the coaches we met in *Ringside*:
<https://www.chicagotribune.com/sports/ct-spt-little-village-boxing-club-20180525-story.html>

ESPN list of pro-athlete fathers coaching their sons to similar glories:
https://www.espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/23975006/best-father-son-combos-sports

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