

0. WARD-GATTI - FIGHT of the CENTURY - Story Preface

1. THE BOYS OF LOWELL

2. DICKIE EKLUND

3. HIGH ON CRACK IN LOWELL

4. MICKY WARD

5. MICKY WARD - BACK in the RING

6. WARD-GATTI - FIGHT of the CENTURY

7. MICKY WARD and DICKY EKLUND - TODAY



On June 7, 2003, Micky Ward fought his third fight with Arturo Gatti. Ward lost the fight, although both fighters spent some time in the hospital after the match was over. In this photo, taken after the fight, we see Micky with Charlene Fleming, his fiancé, and with his brother, Dickie Eklund.

Micky Ward fought his first boxing match at the age of seven when he took on a ten-year-old from Dedham called Joey Roach. It was 1972, and the boys fought until the match was rained-out. They had completed two of their scheduled three rounds.

At about the same time, but in a different place - across the Atlantic - Giovanni and Ida Gatti had a baby boy. They named him Arturo, but the family did not remain in Italy. After emigrating to Canada, the Gattis settled in Montreal where they raised their children in a home on Joliette Street.

Like Micky Ward, Arturo Gatti started boxing at the age of seven. Both boys had what it took to become popular fighters in their own right, but it wasn't until their names were linked - in a trilogy of matches - that they became really famous.

By the time the fighters met for their first professional encounter - on the 18th of May, 2002, at Mohegan Sun Resort and Casino in Connecticut - they knew much about each other. They had similar styles, for one thing. They also had similar skills.

Neither afraid to step into the ring nor ever willing to give up, both men could give - and take - enormously punishing blows. To maintain high levels of endurance, Gatti was known to routinely run ten miles a day.

Their first match was so exciting that HBO's commentators called it "the fight of the century." Although seven years older, Ward was able to move in close to Arturo where he could land really hard body punches. Jim Lampley noted it was like "fighting in a phone booth," but by the end of the sixth round, Gatti had delivered more than two hundred punches - most of them to Micky's face.

When the ninth round started, the boxers had delivered twenty-four minutes of punishment to each other. Then ... Ward slammed nine blows straight to Gatti's head. Even Micky was stunned that Arturo didn't back down. After the fight, he said (of those moments):

I thought the fight could have been stopped right there. I'm thinking, "What the [heck] does he have in his head?" I know he's a very tough guy, but that's a lot of punishment for somebody to take. (Halloran, quoting Ward, at page 237 of *Irish Thunder*.)

With swollen eyes and hurting bodies, the fighters continued their slug fest. No one watching could believe what they were seeing. That's why commentators call the ninth round, of the first Gatti-Ward fight, the "Round of the Century."

Dickie Eklund knew his brother had courage and admired his unbelievable internal strength. Where Dickie had let himself down, giving in to the lure of drugs, Micky was using his mind to stay incredibly disciplined. He would fight to the end of the tenth round, no matter what additional pain and anguish he had to endure. Giving in to anything was not part of his repertoire.

At the end of the match - after the judges had declared Ward the winner - both fighters ended up in the same emergency room in the same hospital. They had proven their worth, one to the other, and became respected friends.

Spectators, meanwhile, were not satisfied with a single Ward-Gatti match-up. Micky and Arturo fought twice more - on November 23, 2002 (six months after the initial battle) and June 7, 2003. Like the first, both were brawls which went the distance. Unlike the first, Gatti was the winner.

As he had declared beforehand, Micky retired after his third bout with Arturo. He wanted to leave the sport on top, while he still had his health and could enjoy the money he'd earned during the last part of his career.

Ward and Gatti remained good friends ... until ... catastrophe struck in 2009.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WARD-GATTI-FIGHT-of-the-CENTURY-Fighter-The>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WARD-GATTI-FIGHT-of-the-CENTURY-Fighter-The>

Media Stream



Micky Ward with Charlene Fleming and Dickie Eklund

Photo of Micky Ward on June 7, 2003. Online via Wikimedia Commons.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Micky-Ward-with-Charlene-Fleming-and-Dickie-Eklund0>



Arturo Gatti - Micky Ward

Image of Arturo Gatti, with Micky Ward, online courtesy Yorkshirehighlanders.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Arturo-Gatti-Micky-Ward>



Arturo Gatti v Micky Ward - First Fight, Round 9

Clip of the 9th round, first Ward-Gatti fight, online courtesy HBO. Copyright, HBO, all rights reserved.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Arturo-Gatti-v-Micky-Ward-First-Fight-Round-9>



Micky Ward and Charlene Fleming

Clip of Micky Ward, Charlene Fleming and Arturo Gatti, following the first Ward-Gatti fight. Online, courtesy HBO. Copyright, HBO, all rights reserved.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Micky-Ward-and-Charlene-Fleming>