

Realestate

UNDERCOVER AGENT: Today we introduce a new monthly feature delving beyond the suits of Gold Coast real estate agents to uncover their extraordinary pasts. SHAE JOHNSON reports

Life in the school of hard knocks

BEHIND the gentle demeanor and thick English accent of Fletcher Gibson, Queensland South agent Robbie Robinson lies a real rags-to-riches tale of a former professional lightweight boxer who represented England on 11 occasions.

Robinson grew up in a family of eight living in a two-bedroom flat in Toxteth, an inner-city suburb of Liverpool which had high rates of crime, poverty, unemployment and hostility culminating in riots and frequent scenes of unrest.

"From age five until leaving school at 15 I had to walk past a real school in the one bus stop, every trip I would have at least one, and very often two, street fights almost every day," Robinson said.

"When I was 10 my Dad took me and my eight-year-old brother Shaun to the local boxing club in an attempt to channel our aggression and shorten us out.

"I was short, skinny and didn't have the physique for a boxer. I didn't think I was that good initially and I wasn't a successful schoolboy boxer. But from leaving school at 15 I really started to improve and at 17 in my first season as a semi-pro, I reached the British ABA Championship Finals at Wembley which was broadcast on national TV.

"I well remember a letter arriving at our house in Liverpool when I was 17 informing me that I had been selected to represent England for the first time. My late mum and dad were so proud. In my second season I had gone from obscurity to the best in the country."

Robinson was 25 out of 37 amateur bouts as a senior before moving up to the featherweight division where he met Manchester's John Trainer in his first bout.

"I was so strong at the new weight and I just walked right through him. He was down three times before the referee stopped it," he recalls.

Robinson boxed professionally from 1978 to 1983 and although he missed in the top class, appeared regularly on television and beat several British and Commonwealth champions, he never won a major national title.

"I do remember some funny times though. In 1982 I took a 30 round fight in Berlin, a small country between Nigeria and Ghana, against their World Champion Davidson Anzoh. It was wild, in an old, run-down stadium, and they managed to cram



THE ELIMINATOR MAN



Counterclockwise from top left, Robbie Robinson fighting Tony Carroll in 1982; the Liverpool film *The Eliminator* (1982); Robinson in *The Eliminator* (1982); Robinson in *The Eliminator* (1982); Robinson in *The Eliminator* (1982); Robinson in *The Eliminator* (1982).

more than 20,000 people in there. Davidson Anzoh was killed and I was the only white fighter on the bill. In fact, my coach and I were the only white people there," he said.

"Straight from the start the crowd were hostile towards us and near the end of the first round a few minutes before he got thrown at us and although my trainer kept shouting at me 'let's get off' I refused as I still wanted to fight.

"When a bottle flew past my eyes and missed me by an inch I decided to take the coach's advice and we did a runner from the ring. We were ushered into a police car but the crowd swarmed our bus and were trying to jump the car over."

"Two of the policemen went to work with their batons... and the crowd duly dispersed and we were able to drive away. It was only then I

realised I still had my boxing gloves and shorts on - I never got my clothes back. The next day I read in the paper that I'd been stopped in the first round - and that's what my record still says today."

Robinson went on to stop British and Commonwealth Super Featherweight Champion Najib Dabas from Morocco in three rounds, beat British Light-Weightweight champion Lloyd Christie on points and triumphed against former British karate champion Lance Williams.

"I loved boxing, it was never good at any other sport - I'm the only guy out of Liverpool who can't play soccer," he Robinson said.

"But unfortunately I was very prone to cuts and after losing a facial eliminator for the British and European titles due to a badly cut eye, which needed eight stitches, I



decided that enough was enough. I was only 24 but my dad had always said that in a tough, often brutal sport like professional boxing it was better to finish a couple of fights too early rather than a couple of fights too late.

"I boxed for England 11 times in all and won 35 of 57 senior bouts and I'm very proud of that. It took me to places I'd never dreamed of."

"It was great to represent the county on an international level. It's the best accolade you could get."

He retired in the Margaret Thatcher era when work in north England was hard to come by.

"I left Liverpool to search for work in the mid-80s. I was divorced, jobless, had no real qualifications and down to my last £5 before I was fortunate enough to get a job in hospitality on the Queen Elizabeth 2," he said.

"I had three memorable years sailing around the world. As luck would have it when the ship docked in

Tokyo we had a coach take people to the Mike Tyson v Buster Douglas World Heavyweight Championships. It turned out, of course, to be a fantastic fight - one of the greatest upsets in boxing history. If you watch the tail end of the video on YouTube you'll see me in the ring."

In 1991 he joined the original "Love Boat" with P&O and while onboard met his wife Laura, who was the hairdressing manager and now works alongside him at Fletcher Gold Coast South.

"They married at Mt Cool-tha Bkane Gardens, lived and worked in Sydney for five years before relocating to the Gold Coast in 1998."

"We both love Australia and the Gold Coast in particular. We have two beautiful children, Emily and Patrick. They're typical Aussie kids - energetic and on the beach almost every day. I often look at them and think what a great life they have in this beautiful country - a far cry from Liverpool all those years ago."