

# **TOM YANKELLO, JR.**

## **Biography**

Like many young men, Yankello started boxing after receiving a pair of boxing gloves as a gift at the age of five. Boxing was in Yankello's bloodstream, however. Tom's father's brother, Mike Yankello, was a Naval Boxing Champion and Tom's mother's father, Charles Vallecorsa, was an amateur boxer. Tom fell in love with the sport from the culmination of watching the movie Rocky, viewing boxing events with his family, hearing stories of how his Uncle Mike boxed in the Navy and how his Grandfather Charles boxed in the amateurs, and from his father creating a ring in his basement along with different types of bags which is where Tom spent most of his childhood past time.

Yankello, who had been a talented boxer in the amateur ranks and considered by many local boxing followers as world-class, worked under area boxing trainers such as Jerry Magio, Ray Palladini, and BC Hall-of-Famer Carmie Price. Yankello was marred by freak shoulder and elbow injuries that resulted in four surgeries and kept him from his dream of ever turning professional.

In 1991 Tom began training boxers. Now considered as one of boxing's premier trainers, he managed and trained amateur and professional fighters first at the Beaver County Boxing Club and then later at Tom Yankello's World Class Boxing Gym. Tom, along with his Father, Tom Sr., created a top boxing establishment catering to both amateurs and professionals. In 2014, Tom Yankello was inducted into the Beaver County Hall of Fame for all of his accomplishments.

Today there's an alarming lack of knowledgeable teachers available in the sport to instill the fundamentals and skills within boxers that are necessary for success in the toughest of professions. Being a boxing aficionado does not make one a qualified, competent trainer and there is no "one size fits all" when it comes to training. The transition from the amateurs to the paid ranks is a monumental task which requires true knowledge and aptitude. To be able to develop fighters into contenders and Champions from early on is something many other top trainers have never accomplished and to do it without leaving the area for the boxing hot beds of the West Coast or South Florida to work with prepped primadonna talent, is special and recognizable.

Born in Aliquippa, Tom is the son of Thomas Sr. and Linda Yankello. Tom is married to Tina and they have two children, Thomas Taddeo (3), who was born on Yankello's birthday and Rocco Arturo (1). Tom was a 1989 graduate of Beaver Area High School where he played Basketball and ran Track.

### **A few highlights of Tom's career include:**

- \* 2014 Inducted into the Beaver County Hall of Fame
- \* 2007/2008 Honorable mention to Official Top 5 Trainers in the World list by Doug Fischer, Ring Magazine.

\* Worked 100+ World & Regional Title bouts & many other significant nationally & internationally televised bouts.

\* “If I were managing a fighter & needed a trainer who could take us all the way, Tommy Yankello would be on my short list. What he does with his talent is very impressive. His passion & enthusiasm for the sport, & his commitment to his fighters, is as good as anybody’s.” - Joe Tessitore, ESPN Boxing

**Paul Spadafora:** Known to the boxing world as a master technician of the sweet science, he was the first major world champion from Pittsburgh since 1941 (Billy Conn) holding the IBF Title from 1999 to 2003 & also a comeback that brought him back to the world title stage at the age of 38. In 1999, Spadafora would overcome 5-to-1 odds to thoroughly dominate heavy favorite Pito Cardona to win the IBF world title in a performance that has gone down in history as one of the finest displays of pugilistic skills ever demonstrated and one that earned him ESPN Fighter of the Year.

**Calvin Brock:** In early 2002, Yankello would take on another development project, this time a Heavyweight. Yankello would go onto develop Brock into a technically sound fighter offensively and defensively and with much improved knockout power. Carl Moretti, VP of Operations for Top Rank, Inc., would claim along the way during press conferences in the early years that when Brock joined Yankello it was literally like “night and day” and continued time and time again for years to claim Brock as the most improved fighter he knew of in the sport. Highly respected boxing journalist Steve Kim in a 2006 piece stated that Brock’s development and improvement over the years has been as startling as that of any boxer in recent memory. Brock would go onto numerous successful televised and minor title bouts including claiming professional boxing’s 2006 KO of the Year vs. Zuri Lawrence at Las Vegas’ Mandalay Bay Arena and finally earning a shot at Ring Magazine’s universally recognized Heavyweight Champion of the World Wladimir Klitschko at New York’s Madison Square Garden.

**Roy Jones Jr.:** Widely recognized as one of the all-time greats including being named "Fighter of the Decade" for the 1990’s and the only boxer in history to start his career as a Junior Middleweight (154 lbs) and go on to win a Heavyweight title. Upon an analysis phase, the 8-time World Champion Jones chose Yankello over other top trainers to take over as Head Trainer from 2011-2013 in an attempt to capture the one title that eluded him in his prime years, a Cruiserweight Title and together they went undefeated over this period and captured the UBO Inter-Continental Cruiserweight Title.

**Brian Minto:** As longtime boxing promoter Dino Duva would state “Whenever a fighter improves as quickly and drastically as Minto has, he becomes an unknown commodity that makes it harder to find him a big fight. None of the bigger names seem to want to step up and risk what they’ve got against a guy who looks better and better with every fight the way he does. He's the most rapidly improving fighter on the planet.” Minto, a once limited club fighter with minimal amateur experience sought the assistance of Yankello early on in his career and developed over time into an quick handed top contender who stole shows in front of a sold out German crowds in a dominating knockout victory over three-time world title challenger Axel Schultz and a highly controversial close points loss to former WBO World Champion Luan Krasniqi. Anyone who witnessed these bouts or the masterful display of professional techniques Minto showed in the rematch destruction of Vinnie Maddalone on a previous HBO card could

see Yankello's signature all over them. He further went onto challenge former world title challenger Chris Arreloa on HBO, WBO Cruiserweight World Title in Germany vs. Champion Marco Huck, Semi-Finalist in the Prizefighter Tournament in London, England, and another upset special in Auckland, New Zealand vs. Shane Cameron to capture the WBO Oriental heavyweight title.

**Monty Meza-Clay:** Yankello also groomed another upstart in Monty Meza-Clay from day one of his professional career, an unfortunate youth police brutality victim who was fully acquitted by the court of law of any wrongdoing that had resulted in the despicable unfair act, one that plagues him to this day. Meza-Clay worked himself to the #1 World Ranking through multiple national television performances before coming up short in Mexico vs. World Champion Jorge Solis. Meza-Clay who continues to battle injuries currently holds an impressive 34W-3L, 21KO.

**Verquan Kimbrough:** Start up project Verquan Kimbrough, whom Yankello introduced to boxing to when he was 10 years old, went on to guide him to United States national amateur championships at every level of progression and was the USA Boxing's golden child and gold medal hopeful until deciding to turn professional in 2003 after being lured away by an irrefutable economic offer versus waiting for the Games. Through all of his accomplishments Kimbrough was the most decorative amateur in the history of Western Pennsylvania and the first boxer to win a national title since former heavyweight champion Michael Moorer. Heartbreakingly Kimbrough battled the adversity of bulimia as a professional that derailed his development physically, mentally and overall well-being.

**Kiante Irving:** Yankello started Kiante when he was 16 years old. Today he is ranked #2 in the country at 178 lbs. The most noteworthy accomplishments include: 2011 Western PA Golden Gloves Champion, 2013 Western PA Golden Gloves Champion, 2014 Western PA Golden Gloves Champion, 2016 Donneybrook Champion USA vs Ireland; Also won Billy Conn Award for Most Outstanding Fighter of the event, 2016 Western PA Golden Gloves Champion, 2016 USA Champion vs. Cuba on Roberto Clemente Bridge, 2017 Western PA Golden Gloves Champion, 2017 Pennsylvania Golden Gloves Champion, 2017 National Champion- Western Elite Qualifier and Regional Open Championships, 2017 National Golden Gloves Semifinalist, and 2017 Made Team USA and fought in the Continental Americas Championship.

**Notable Others:**

Teddy "Two Gun" Reid, WBO World Title Challenger, NABF Champion, USBA Champion  
Andres "Taylor Made" Taylor, WBF Americas Champion, Western Trials Champion  
"Big Chief" Morgan Fitch, National Title Champion  
Jesse Lubash, Eastern Trails Champion, PA State Golden Gloves Champion  
Danny "Bhoy" O'Connor, Alternate US Olympic Boxing Team, National Golden Gloves Champion  
Jaque "Lights Out" Lutz, PA State Golden Gloves Champion  
Ed Latimore, National PAL Champion, PA State Golden Gloves Champion  
"Lightning" Rod Salka, IBO International Champion, NABA US Champion  
"Lightning" Manard Reed, WBF Americas Champion, IBC Americas Champion  
Jacy Kuhn, WV State Champion, National PAL Champion  
Abraham "The African Assassin" Okine, IBC Americas Champion  
Scott McCracken, WV State Champion, PA State Golden Gloves Champion

Mike "Steel City" Strauss, PA State Golden Gloves Champion  
Jimmy Lubash, PA State Golden Gloves Champion

### **Stay Off the Streets, Inc.**

In 1995, Tom began Stay Off the Streets, Inc., a non-profit program whose aim is to rescue forgotten children from the dangers of the streets, troubled homes, and negative role models.

Every day in Western Pennsylvania, children are victims of abusive parents, gangs, and drugs. For years, Tom Yankello's Stay Off the Streets Program has served as a sanctuary of opportunity that equips our youth with the tools necessary to survive, not only in the boxing ring, but in real life.

Yankello's Gym is a growing family, where children are instilled with discipline, self-esteem, work ethic, and the competitive spirit necessary to succeed in all walks of life.

Tom's program is designed to turn underprivileged children into responsible young men that become active members of the community, and in some cases, World Champions. As Tom states himself, "Sure I want them to become good boxers, but more than anything I want them to become good people."

Tom's goal is to help more children successfully change their lifestyle but he can't do it without our help.

One of Stay Off the Streets participant, Scott McCracken says, "if it wasn't for Tom I would not be where I am today. He has kept me on my toes and out of trouble."