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Third Man in the Ring: 33 of Boxing's Best Referees and Their Stories

Michael Fitzgerald

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Officiating a professional boxing match can be a thankless job. When a match goes well, no one focuses on the referee. But when a controversy arises, everyone remembers the man who made the call. *Third Man in the Ring* explores the lives of thirty-three officials as they discuss what goes on inside the ropes and recount the disputes and clashes that have occurred when they worked at home and abroad. The referees share stories from the high-profile fights they worked, with such superstars as Oscar De La Hoya, Manny Pacquiao, Floyd Mayweather Jr., Muhammad Ali, Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield, Larry Holmes, and Julio César Chávez. Readers will hear from Rudy Battle, the first ref to officiate a title fight in an Eastern bloc country, and Mills Lane, the third man during the infamous Mike Tyson/Evander Holyfield ear-biting match. Several officials reveal memorable moments such as arbitrating contests in nations experiencing civil unrest. One referee admits fearing for his life after disqualifying a hometown hero in front of a packed stadium, while another recalls his experience officiating in communist North Korea. Referees describe from experience the differences between officiating a boxing contest in a traditional ring versus the increasingly popular mixed martial arts events held in an octagon. Readers will also hear stories from refs who have “gone Hollywood,” consulting on film sets alongside such legends as Sylvester Stallone. An old boxing adage states, “The best referees are the ones no one knows are there.” *Third Man in the Ring* sheds much-needed light on these hardworking officials and their stories.

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