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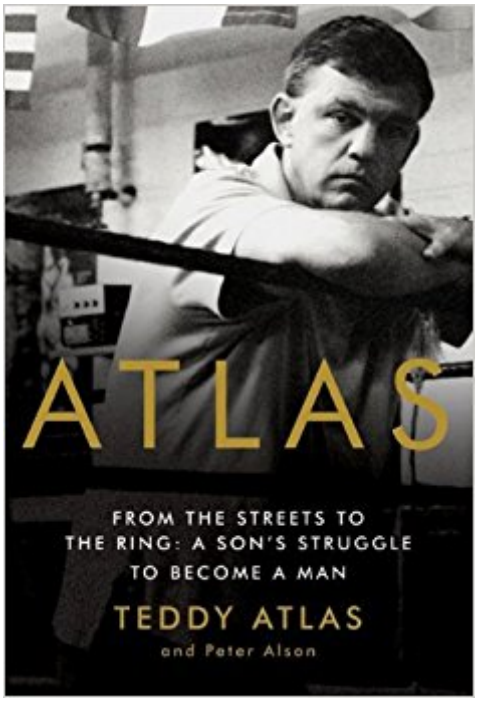
Atlas: From The Streets To The Ring: A Son's Struggle To Become A Man



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Synopsis

"Of all the people who have affected by my life and influence the choices I've made, none has been more important than my father."So begins the autobiography of legendary boxing trainer and commentator Teddy Atlas, who grew from the rebellious son of a doctor to a man who embraces, and lives by, his father's values and code.In this gritty, spellbinding tale, Atlas recounts his fascinating life -- as a juvenile delinquent on the streets of Staten Island; as a boxer and Golden Gloves champion under the tutelage of famed trainer Cus D'Amato; as a companion to the dangerous, unpredictable Sammy "the Bull" Gravano, up until the day Gravano turned rat and brought down crime boss John Gotti; and as a trainer of champions and contenders, among them fourteen-year-old Mike Tyson and heavyweight Michael Moorer, whom he led to the crown with a win over Evander Holyfield.Equally engrossing are Teddy Atlas's accounts of training dancer and choreographer Twyla Tharp for her successful comeback at age forty-two; his work with actor Willem Dafoe, preparing him for his role as a concentration camp boxer in the film Triumph of the Spirit; his journey to Poland to choreograph the film's boxing scenes; and his own performance in movies such as Play It to the Bone. In sharing his stories, Atlas reveals the philosophy by which he lives.Like Teddy Atlas -- inimitable, tough, honest, and wise -- this book inspires. It is about so much more than boxing. It is a story of overcoming hardships, of compassion for those in need, of tremendous personal integrity, and of personal and professional triumph.

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Customer Reviews

Boxing trainer and ESPN commentator Atlas ruminates on fighting as a form of masculine

psychotherapy, from his own youthful street brawling to his stints training a young Mike Tyson and heavyweight champ Michael Moorer. His theme is the male psyche’s craving for paternal approval, evinced in his juvenile acting out against an emotionally distant dad and his ringside relationships with a succession of surrogate sons. With them, Atlas’s mentoring toggles between fatherly tenderness ("I care about you. You’re important to me") and tough-love harangues ("hit him in the fuckin’ balls and become a fighter or you get on the next train and you get the fuck out of my life!"). He also becomes a spiritual guide to celebrity clients like Twyla Tharp, whom he lectures on the need to face one’s fears, and Willem Dafoe, with whom he discusses the nature of truth. Atlas’s exhaustively transcribed motivational sermons can be wearisome, and in his self-serving accounts of boxing industry intrigues he is always loyal and principled. But he and amanuensis Alson tell his story with plenty of atmospherics, Runyonesque characters and an illuminating focus on the boxer’s internal battle. Photos. (May 9) Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

â œThe book is a winner, on all cards, from the first to the final bell.â • (Boston Globe)â œA work of cumulative, powerful impact: [Teddy Atlas] doesnâ ™t allow anyone, readers included, to evade lifeâ ™s tough questions.â • (Kirkus Reviews)

This is one of those compulsively readable books, probably due to how honest the author is about his own mistakes and shortcomings. Teddy Atlas has led a storied life and spares no details in this book (I almost wrote "pulls no punches" but I’ll save the corniness for another review).Atlas came from an upper-middle class Jewish family, headed by a father who was a doctor more devoted to his patients than to the care of his wife and children. Teddy didn’t find the attention he sought at home, so he went out into the streets, mixing it up in the housing projects of Stapleton, Staten Island. He pulled armed robberies and got in fights. One of these exchanges left him with a wound that required four-hundred stitches, and left a scar that became the defining feature of his face.Atlas charts his journey from jail to upstate New York (where he worked under the tutelage of legendary trainer Cus D’Amato), on into his years working with future heavyweight kingpin Mike Tyson. The book is liberally peppered with Atlas’s wisdom and philosophy as it applies to life both inside the ring and life in general."Atlas" carries a coauthor tag, but Teddy’s gruff voice is unmistakably etched into each page of the book. This is right up there with Thomas Hauser’s "Black Lights" and Joyce Carol Oates’ "On Boxing." It’s that good. Highest Recommendation.

I am a long time boxing enthusiast, back to the times in the 50's when my Dad had the only 8" black & white TV in the neighborhood in a 6 ft long counsul with a radio on one end and a "78 record player on the other. Friday Night at the fights was a day men went only to our house and my Mom fled because of all of the cussing, beer drinking and shadow boxing going on as Dad and 5 or 6 or more neighbors got rip roaring drunk and had a great time..... Man it was exciting, I was born in 1946 so being with men as they were watching the boxing matches was a big deal. They were drinking their beers and going on and on about former Champs. Joe Louim, Carmen Basililo Mariciano to name but a few I felt like I knew them personally. I also knew all of the names of the promoters and referres and actually played this great time with my Dad until he passed in the 90's, Right up until closed circut TV started, We could never afford to go to a "Real Fight" besides they only held them in Detroit and that was 60 miles away.By then they were talking about how corrupt the sport had become, of course he never realized it was corrupt it really was even when I was a kid and we were in our living room.Teddy Atlas I feel is the ultimate example of been there done that. Unlike many books being released now by former boxers or trainers, Teddy is not shy, He tells it like it is..... if you want the truth with no sugar here it is, He will tell you what fighters he trained to be Champs then got shaftet as they left him for the corrupt promoters.He also fought his way up to be the incredible trainer he is and would not take a buy out or throw a fight, unlike many of the writers of these others books. Thankfully Teddy has not been affected by Parkingson's disease as so many of our greats have.If you want a great narrative Teddy gives it to you, one of the reveiwers says Teddy talks to much about himself. My feelings are when you are in the middle of the fray and know the details "Why would you Not Talk about the truth and your own adventures"This ia a keeper book and I feel one that holds no punches just as Teddy never held a punch or had one of his fighters do that. The truth's of Don King, Dundee, Arum and the rest of the questionable promoters are revealed as are the fights that, were delibertly thrown or traded to keep their fighter away from a tougher fighter so he could hit pay dirt while the better boxer in many cases died penniless.. Check this one book out,there are other great books like Teddy's but not many that tell the truth as he does. I think or hope you enjoy reading this as much as I did. Besides it belongs in my Library of all Non Fiction and History Books only.

The psychology of sculpturing both boxers and himself is the core of Teddy Atlas's autobiography. "Atlas" traces his circuitous route from Staten Island street thug, emotionally ignored by his doctor father, to renowned trainer. Along the way he dropped out of high school, did jail time, studied under the legendary boxing guru Cus D'Amato, suffered a 400-stitch switchblade slash across his cheek,

cocked a revolver at Mike Tyson’s ear, became a husband and a father, worked out with the mobster Sammy (the Bull) Gravano, guided Michael Moorer to the heavyweight championship, developed into a respected ESPN boxing analyst and created a charitable foundation in his father’s name to help "people who might otherwise fall through the cracks." As he almost did.It’s all here Ã¢Â Â” the good, the bad and the ugly of Teddy Atlas, often rendered in a crude but convincing street language, captured so faithfully and so forcefully by his collaborator, Peter Alson. In remembering a young Tyson who wanted to quit because his tough opponent kept getting up, Atlas defines the crossroads of "the truth and a lie" that confronts every up-and-coming boxer. The lie, Atlas, is thinking that submission is an acceptable option. The truth is that if you give up, afterward you’ll realize that any of those punches that you thought you couldn’t deal with, or those rough moments you didn’t think you could make it through, were just moments. Enduring them is not nearly as tough as having to deal with the next day and the next month and the next year, knowing that you quit, that you failed, that you submitted. It’s a trainer’s job to make a fighter understand that difference.When Atlas rejected an offer from Sammy the Bull Ã¢Â Â” a government informer in the John Gotti trial who is now serving 20 years in prison for drug trafficking Ã¢Â Â” to bankroll a stable of boxers, with everything in Atlas’s name, he thought, "Does that mean the indictments, too?" When Michael Moorer, his heavyweight challenger, wanted to take a day off from training, Atlas reminded him that one day off wouldn’t affect his physical conditioning but it would make him "soft mentally." The night of the fight, he explained, Moorer would consider it O.K. not to face what he had to face. "On the other hand," Atlas said, "if you do what I tell you to, what you’re supposed to do, on that night you’ll know that you faced what you had to face every day Ã¢Â Â” and you’ll draw strength from that." Moorer did what Atlas told him to do and what he was supposed to do; then, in 1994, he outpointed Evander Holyfield for the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation titles. Not that Atlas had much respect, then or now, for boxing’s governing bodies. "The alphabet soup of sanctioning groups," he writes, "is a corrupt joke."Teddy Atlas did not invent street smarts, but he knows how to use them.

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